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# JOURNEY TO THE EDGE OF MORNING

*Thoughts upon Books: Love: Life*

*by*

ERIC PARTRIDGE

LONDON

FREDERICK MULLER LTD.

29 GREAT JAMES STREET, W.C.1

**THE SWARAJ BOOK DEPOT.**

**KHAIRATABAD, HYDERABAD DN.**

FIRST PUBLISHED BY FREDERICK & MULLER, LTD.,  
IN 1945

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN  
BY BUTLER & TANNER LTD.,  
FROME & LONDON



*Second Edition 1947*

FOR  
THE DELECTATION  
OF  
THE DELECTABLE



## FOREWORD

**I**N this little book, I have not aimed to achieve the 'set pieces' of formal criticism, analytical psychology, academic philosophy. My aim has been very much less pretentious and presumptuous : in literary criticism, merely to set forth, cursorily and almost at random, a few of my 'mind's adventures among books' (as Anatole France defined such criticism) ; in the chapter on human affections, to do no more than to jot down, without any idea or hope of even an approximation to finality, a few connected thoughts upon a vast subject ; and in the concluding chapter, to arrange, in at least a semblance of consecutiveness, some of my own quests and some of my responses to life itself.

Perhaps I ought to add that these thoughts have conveyed themselves to paper during such leisure as I obtained during the last fifteen months or so of my service with the R.A.F.

E. P.



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## CHAPTER I

### *Books and Writers*

**L**IKE the majority of those who, from an early age, have been insatiable readers, I have read much that is hopelessly inferior, hopelessly mediocre ; and much that, although interesting, is yet devoid of literary value. But ever since my taste acquired a standard, I have been able to extract some profit from even the most trashy book : a book that is literarily worthless may be psychologically illuminating or spiritually valuable, precisely as a spiritually worthless book may be psychologically profitable or stylistically admirable.

In addition to reading much philosophy (metaphysics, ethics, psychology and a little logic), I have read more than a whit in travel, history, biography and autobiography ; in literary criticism and philology ; in drama, poetry, the essay ; above all, a mass of fiction : both classic and modern, Classic and Continental, British and American. Until I reached my thirtieth year, I was in the habit of reading very quickly ; thereafter, I have read slowly—some would say, very slowly—for I wish to savour the manner as well as enjoy the matter, to study the psychology and meditate upon the spiritual significance as well as to dissect the style ; to obtain both a synthesis and an analysis. To know why I like or dislike ; to understand and ponder that which I learn or re-learn. Not to clutter my memory with names but to enrich it with outlooks and inter-

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pretations, and with beauty, whether æsthetic, intellectual, or ethical.

To avoid even the appearance of setting out upon a conspèctive world-tour of ancient and modern literature, I wish merely to say that I enjoy the books of almost every nation and of every period. The two periods of English literature that I prefer are the Elizabethan (my favourite) and the Victorian, those which I know best are the Elizabethan, the 18th Century, the 20th Century. Admiring intellectual beauty and not only æsthetic beauty, I prefer Browning to Tennyson, Meredith to Hardy, Gibbon to Carlyle, Sir Thomas Browne to De Quincey—and Walter Savage Landor to either. Yet I prefer Keats to Shelley and Byron, Blake to any other 18th-Century poet ; Keats lived for his art, especially for the loveliness he could thereby express ; Shelley for his ideas, the more in that he kept them romantic ; Byron for himself ; Blake for his visions.

Here I shall confine myself to certain figures in 20th-Century fiction ; an ordered selection from my reading.

I prefer the pre-1914 Wells to Arnold Bennett, Galsworthy to either, and Chesterton to all three ; that is, Chesterton as a literary entity to Galsworthy as one, although I think it likely that *The Man of Property* and *The Apple Tree* will outlast anything that Chesterton wrote. From the latter I derive a greater intellectual stimulus and a profounder spiritual satisfaction and elation. Bennett I suppose to be already outmoded and unlikely to emerge from the usual post-mortem depreciation except as a sociological curiosity ; and Wells I prophesy to survive only by *Mr Kipps*, by perhaps one other novel of the same genre, possibly by *Ann Veronica* or *Tono Bungay*, and also, as a name and a label, by the fact that he is Jules Verne's best

imitator. The more psychological novels of Conrad will soon have been forgotten : *Typhoon*, *Lord Jim*, and *The Mirror of the Sea* will, I think, live. Rather his short stories than his novels, will, in literary annals, ensure for Somerset Maugham a niche as a Gallic lucidian and a brilliant satirist, sub-acid and neatly trenchant ; sharp-tongued, tender-hearted ; foiled idealist, self-castigatory.

The antithesis of Maugham is Hugh Walpole (whom once I met—on the way to Lord's). Walpole is extravagant, romantic, diffuse, an impressionistic sensationalist of the emotions. His best work lies in his school novel, in *The Dark Forest* and *The Countess of Wrexe*, and in his ' thrillers ' ; as the social historian of Victorian England, he is misleading—much inferior, for instance, to the Michael Sadleir of *Fanny by Gaslight*. Though vain and inordinately ambitious, he could, one gathers, be a delightful companion ; certainly he seemed genial, open-hearted, friendly. But, like Bennett, he was much over-rated in the 1920's and 1930's : witness, to take but one example, the space they receive, and the praise, in John Drinkwater's *The Outline of Literature* ; neither Campbell Nairne nor I have, in our recensions of *The Outline*, done much to equilibrate the scales of literary justice, partly because we felt that even we were chronologically too close to set those two writers (and several others) in a just perspective.

One of the earliest critics to do something to counteract Hugh Walpole's excessive reputation was John Brophy, who, admirer and eulogist of C. E. Montague, despised Walpole's inability to select and prune. The best of Brophy's earlier (i.e., pre-1930) novels is *The Bitter End*, which deals with the war of 1914-1918 ; one of the best of the post-1930 novels is *Waterfront*, and *Immortal Sergeant* the best of all ; his most picturesque novels either treat

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of or introduce Egypt, where he lived for a while. His style, like his judgement, is sharp and clear ; deft and furnished. He may yet equal his master, for, granted health, he has at least twenty good writing-years before him. He is a pungent satirist and a most perspicuous narrator. In these later years, I have seen far too little of him.

A second writer friend is Neil Bell, whose romances have been influenced by the scientific fantasies of H. G. Wells ; Neil Bell's are less scientific, more imaginative, and *The Seventh Bowl*, the earliest, is perhaps also the best of them. In another novel, he would seem to have been fascinated by the theme of Wells's *Tono Bungay*, but he himself has written a virile and convincing rebuttal of this supposition. Neil Bell's later studies, whether of individual character or of family life, are mature and very readable. Clearly he possesses a proliferating abundance and a remarkable fertility of invention, a deep insight into the workings of mind and heart, and a superb gift of story-telling : if he exercised a little more artistic care in revision, he would perhaps attain to the most enviable heights, for his work shows a fine sincerity and a sturdily intransigent independence. He has also written some extremely readable short stories, and, under another name, some of the best 'juveniles' of the two modern Georgian periods. My daughter Rosemary treasures those children's books which Stephen Southwold has presented to her ; her father values the fair-weather-or-foul, the unfailing friendship of Neil Bell.

Another literary friend (though how vehemently he would spurn the adjective !) is Hugh Kimber, whose *Time to Stop Laughing* I, in November 1943, read in its earlier, much shorter version. Both he and I believe it to show a

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big advance on *Prelude to Calvary*, which would have satisfied many a popular novelist. Kimber is far too forthright and dynamic to please the crowd ; he disturbs the complacent, perturbs the thoughtful. Men and women of integrity, however, sense in him a force and a portent, graced with beauty and shot with loveliness : a mind that hot-knifes the butter of sham, pretension, and hypocrisy, and marches gallantly forward to the flaming core of truth : a man loved of the few he has permitted to know him and obscurely feared by most of the numerous lesser men he has met. Go to it, Hugh ! Do not let contempt of writers and artists prevent you from creating the works that some of us know you can write ; without them, the world will be the poorer.

At the opposite emotional pole to Hugh Kimber are those intellectualist writers of fiction, E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, who are revered by coteries, admired by middle-brows, and shunned by low-brows. Stylistically, the most exciting and original is Mrs. Woolf, who successfully exploited the stream-of-consciousness vein that had been tapped by the too-little-known Dorothy Richardson ; her matter is less exciting than her manner. Aldous Huxley, the youngest of the three, is perhaps the most advanced, and intellectually, at least, he is the most daring. As art, his short and middle-length stories are superior to his novels, and his earlier novels more entertaining than his later ; moreover, he is at his most distinctive in the essay, a form in which he has achieved a rare felicity. E. M. Forster is too donnish to cope satisfactorily with ' the great unwashed ' (an obsolescent cliché that is no longer applicable to the vast majority of the masses), too puritanical to deal convincingly with passion, and too much preoccupied with form to do

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passionate justice to his matter. Admiring his technique and his integrity, I find his remoteness, his ivory-towered seclusiveness, distasteful and think *Howard's End* much superior to the vaunted, idolized *Passage to India*. *Howard's End* is a first-rate novel—and it will live.

Intellectually notable, and quite as intellectual as the three writers just mentioned, are three women novelists : May Sinclair, who understands men better than do most men ; F. Tennyson Jesse ; and Rose Macaulay. The first is the least known, but those who have read her books recognize that she has a *cachet* and a *bouquet* of her own. Subtlest of her novels is that in which she has written on the theme of a man's cowardice ; her most passionately felt, most eloquently written fiction is in her admirable short stories—she was a contributor to *The English Review* in its most potent days. The greatest of the three, however, is F. Tennyson Jesse, who has also written several excellent biographies : the best writer and the finest novelist ; the subtlest and most versatile, yet the most powerful stylist. How inter-different are *A Pin to see the Peepshow*, *The Lacquer Lady* and *Act of God*, of which the first dramatically fictionizes a famous murder, with a psychological skill and profundity that have elicited the emulous envy of more than one professional psychologist and psychiatrist, the second a spirited, tapestry-rich novelizing of a murderous period of Far-Eastern history, and the third a scalpel-trenchant analysis of a superficial, self-serious woman, in addition to being a gently ironic, unsentimentally sympathetic study in the genesis of a miracle-myth. For those who have not yet read Tennyson Jesse, her books will constitute a revelation, whether in artistically eloquent and moving themes and psychologically subtle explications of the stories (self-sufficient as tales) or in delicate

overtones that will delight the cultured, the perceptive, the thoughtful. The third writer, Rose Macaulay, is more overtly satiric, more essentially literary in her fiction ; her serious novels are considerably superior to her lighter ones. She is a sound, scholarly and witty critic and a delectable essayist. To be castigated by her is to experience the acme of vanity-wounded humiliation ; to be praised by her resembles the being treated as a connoisseur by a connoisseur. Rose Macaulay sturdily aligns herself with the angels, but blows no trumpets about it ; so far from declaring her faith, she conveys it by subtle indirection. All three women have written verse, some of it more than good ; all three provide an intellectual experience and confer a sense, either of spiritual exaltation or of spiritual compassion ; all three are undogmatically sincere, upright, honourable ; and all three merit a much greater popularity than they have won.

But the greatest of the 'intellectualist' novel-writers, the most intellectual novelist since the death of Meredith in 1909, is Charles Morgan. Even his short novels have more meat, more thinking, and more artistry in them than most of those, three times the length, by other novelists ; his literary criticism, like his dramatic, springs from scrupulously examined first principles and a disciplined originality ; in *Sparkenbroke*, not quite a great novel, he has some extraordinarily acute, profound, penetrating things to say of literary creation and the poetic afflatus, of the spirit and the mind of a modern poet. It is, however, in *The Voyage* (his finest book) and *The Fountain* (with which one might profitably compare R. C. Hutchinson's *The Unforgotten Prisoner*) that Charles Morgan has written two novels that will survive along with the best novel by Galsworthy, by Bennett, by Wells : to read either of these



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two books is to pass through a notable, an unforgettable spiritual experience. Posterity may well adjudge *The Voyage* to surpass anything of Bennett's or Wells's and to equal anything of Galsworthy's. Of how many 20th-Century novels can we say that their leisurely, reflective perusal subjects us to a spiritual catharsis and an enduring intellectual stimulation? Helen Waddell's *Peter Abelard* is one; John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is a second; there are several others, but it were perhaps invidious to particularize them. Yet it would be wrong to imply that Charles Morgan is only intellectual and spiritual (what would some of us give to merit that 'only' !): in Barbet he has created one of the few permanent and ever-lovable characters of modern fiction. He combines—indeed, he fuses—clarity and vision, realism and idealism, the intellectual and the emotional. And how subtle and delicate, yet arresting and, on due occasion, objective, is his style! How lucid, how apposite! The final impression and the abiding psychological gain that come from reading Morgan are those of spiritual exhilaration and reinvigoration, of intellectual stimulus and, in the best sense, provocativeness, and of æsthetic delectation. Moreover, he and Ivor Brown are among the very few writers concerned to preserve the great tradition of the English essay at its best.

As a contrast to the intellectualist group in general, take two superlatively virile novelists, C. S. Forester and Geoffrey Household. Forester's early books were slight, fanciful, unconvincing; and then, by way of that transitional story, *The African Queen*, he became the author of those far from slight, those realistic, those most convincing novels, of which *Brown on Resolution* and *The Gun* and *The General* constituted an admirably inceptive trio, the Horn-

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blower tetralogy (*The Happy Return*, *A Ship of the Line*, *Colours Flying*, and *The Commodore*) an equally admirable ascent, perhaps peak, and *The Ship* a highly concentrated epitome of his narrative art. Forester does not lack humour, but such humour as he permits himself is grim and ironic ; not a wit, he yet obtains an effect of wit by sharp, arresting antithesis and by striking juxtaposition. Telling a story with a severe economy that has an austere beauty of its own, massively and simply and sparsely, he describes in a clear, effective manner, and indicates men's characters by externalities and actions rather than draws them in detail, his psychology being direct, overt, unelaborated. Satirically, he is a master---witness *The General*, which is reputed to cause generals to grow red in the face and to verge upon apoplexy. A careful historian, he never overdoes the historical setting, for he is no imitator of Sir Walter Scott. Warfare, whether on land (*The Gun* and *The General*) or at sea (*Brown on Resolution*, the Hornblower stories, *The Ship*), he treats with such objectivity as is granted to few writers and with an impartiality that is so judicial as to seem almost inhuman. Very much a man's writer, as also is Geoffrey Household, although the latter appeals to women too. Household made his reputation with *Rogue Male*, which is the best tale of adventure since *Treasure Island* and *King Solomon's Mines*. His *The Third Hour*, more ambitiously planned and written, is, as a work of art, less compact, less single, less integrated ; yet its architectonics are superb. His short stories are slighter and more popular. A writer to watch, for he possesses a great narrative gift (purer, leaner, swifter than even Forester's), a style that goes beyond the competent, beyond even the adequate, for it renders notable justice to the matter, a masculinely acute psychol-

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ogy, and a true sense of the dramatic. Whereas Forester's style is a shade muscle-bound, Household's is muscular in the lithe manner of a panther, and whereas, to the former, beauty tends to be moral and heroic, to the latter it appears moon-lovely in the pearl-vaporous heavens and sun-magnificent in the panoplied majesty of emotions expressing themselves richly, daringly, clearly.

Likewise appreciative of manliness and moral firmness and courage (the ancient Roman *virtus*) ; but, rather more subtle than Forester and Household, appreciative also of the Greek ideal of the true, the good, the beautiful ; and, even more than Forester and Household, appreciative of integrity : are James Hilton and R. C. Hutchinson. Hilton is the easier to read ; the more fluent writer ; the more sentimental—with the proviso that, abounding in sentiment, James Hilton never becomes maudlin, mawkish, mushy. Even in *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, the sentiment is salted with whimsicality and a deep understanding of the human heart. Hutchinson's understanding of that capricious organ is, however, somewhat deeper, subtler and wider. Hilton's most serious work is his best ; perhaps *The Lost Horizon* and *A Knight Without Armour* rank highest among his novels. He is an inspiring writer ; he shows, by example (for he does not preach), that man is capable of selfless sacrifices, noble generousities, modest kindnesses, astonishing acts of courage ; and, in these two books, and one or two others, his very style induces a feeling of spiritual invigoration. R. C. Hutchinson, one of Hugh Walpole's protégés, bids fair to surpass—in fact, he has already surpassed—his patron in the art of the novel. Take only his *One Light Burns*, *The Wood and the Fire*, *The Sword in the Scabbard*, and *Testament* : those alone would suffice to make any novelist's reputation, yet the selection

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omits that unforgettable story, *The Unforgotten Prisoner*. *Testament* constitutes a remarkable analysis and diagnosis of a turbulent and turbid period of modern Russian history, powerfully and sympathetically treated; *The Sword in the Scabbard* presents a provincial town of the France of 1913-1914 and, through the medium of a somewhat unattractive set of characters, intimates some great spiritual truths: in the former he has exhibited the throes of a race reborn and resurgent, in the latter the hesitations of a race that, though deteriorating, is yet jolted into resolution. *The Wood and the Fire* implicitly and indirectly novelizes the Nazi persecution of the Jews; a half-Jewish doctor is diabolically goaded and rendered horribly uncomfortable. This book is also a great love-story, unromantic, unsentimental, realistic, yet heroic and magnificently spiritual; a most unconventional love-story—at least one reader has encountered nothing similar, whether in literature or in life. *The Wood and the Fire*, without preaching and without moral discourse, reveals with subtle profundity the invincibility of man's spirit and the all-enduring courage of man's love. The ending is not happy; it is, however, true and deeply moving. But then almost the entire book moves us with the extraordinary power of its unexpressed appeal to our pity. Also a love-story is *One Light Burns*, in which the chief characters are English, although the setting is Russian. The account of an explorer's hardships will cause many a reader to think of the Siberian part of *The Book of Talbot*. In its reticent power, this story of a man's deep, undemonstrative love and of a woman's lovely sympathy reaches a rare height and possesses a rare charm. Hutchinson; in short, impresses one as a writer of tremendous power, which he magisterially directs and masterfully con-

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trols ; as a most penetrating student of the mind and heart and soul of real men and women, with a wonderful aptitude in expressing their inmost, their obscurest secrets and emotions ; and he tells a better story than do most of those who can do nothing else. A writer of an integrity that, ceding nothing to convention, is inviolate, incorruptible : *integer vitæ et mentis et animæ*.

Although not himself a mystic, R. C. Hutchinson understands, better than many mystics, the mystical temperament and character. Professedly mystic—odd, this mysticism in an actor?—is Robert Speaight ; and Walter de la Mare has much of the mystical in his nature, in his poetry and his prose. De la Mare has written some of the subtlest, most delicate and exquisite verse yet produced by the 20th Century. His poetry seems to be charged with a wistful, untearful sadness, a not altogether unhappy nostalgia for the faëry lands forlorn and the magic casements of an existence that should have been his ; he moves like a waif amid the too insistent reality of a materialistic world. A beauty-haunted, dream-ridden waif, patient, courageous, and whimsical ; intellectual, deeply cultured. In his fiction, you see the poet ; you also see the lucid, penetrating thinker. His strange novels and stories tend to be either esoteric or mystical, with gallant probings into the subconscious and the subliminal, with dauntless explorations of the mental Beyond, and with fearless searchings into the arcana of the human heart and soul. He writes an effective and exciting prose, as do so many poets—Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Gray, Walter Savage Landor, Keats, Shelley, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne, Francis Thompson, T. S. Eliot. That his novels require thought repels only those whose laziness precludes or vitiates thought : to the thoughtful, they

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bring a deep and rare delight. Robert Speaight, studious and spiritual as an actor, is a studious, spiritual, mystical novelist—perhaps, after Charles Williams, the greatest mystical novelist we have. Despite their mysticism, his books show a firm grasp of actuality and a most striking acumen. His asides upon art and literature are profound, subtle, delicately appreciative, as are his discourses—little upon life and religion. Moreover, his characterization is remarkable for sympathetic understanding; nor does it lack humour. To read *The Angel in the Mist* is to enter into a different world. A world very well worth the entering. Meriting a place beside De la Mare and Speaight is L. H. Myers, although he does not write quite so well as either of those two. Of the overtones and the undertones of love and passion, Myers is a master, yet he keeps his characters agreeably human. The innate power of this writer appears in the felicity of his ‘unhappy endings’; in the same way, neither Walter de la Mare nor Robert Speaight panders to the popular demand for ‘happy endings’. Why should they? After all, life presents few such endings to those who feel and think strongly, bravely, acutely.

Charles Williams, who died, untimely, in the spring of 1945, is almost as mystical, almost as esoteric in his too few novels as he was in his verse: and in both the poetry and the novels, the visionary joins amicably with the thinker, the lover of life with the lover of words. Neither his poetry nor his fiction, with their Celtic (often specifically Arthurian) and their Byzantine elements, their supernaturalism and their profound Christianity, is easy to read: but, to use a current vogue-word, how ‘rewarding’ are his poems, how stimulating his novels! Among novelists, he stands unequalled for the power with which

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denoted, and the delicate acuity with which he has ed, something exceedingly difficult to convey at all : al conflict, whether within a man's self, or outside r his soul, or, again, between two or among many adous forces : the eternal struggle between Good vil, which he contrives—so deeply does he feel— ig instant upon us. His theological writings, like vels, have much influenced a fellow-Oxonian, ewis. As a critic, too—witness *The Figure of Beatrice* ood far above most of his coevals. Claude Hough- ot a Charles Williams, but he is such a novelist as who remain unenslaved by the robotry of this nistic age cannot afford to ignore. I myself like s *I Am Jonathan Scrivener*, *Hudson Rejoins the Herd*, s and a Book. And as a poet he has something rare, ing precious to say, and he says it notably—which shing in a world containing so many who, with g to say, keep on saying it.

d to De la Mare, Speaight, Myers, Williams and ton, are Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood. n affords an almost too persuasive example of the craftsman and integrated artist that has failed of ury success : despite many disappointments and lacious fame of a disheartening series of *succès* , he has never faltered. Translator of genius, teller nge, perturbing tales, writer of intellectually dish- ed essays, he deserves better of mankind. Even onvincing in his suggestion of fear, dread, horror is y-indirection suggestive writer of tales of mystery agination, Algernon Blackwood. In his prose he s a sense of poetry, in his penumbral conveyances sphere he is an artist combining the delicate shad- ed gently luminous shapes of Corot with more than

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a hint of the macabres of Goya and Gauguin and of the fantasy of Arthur Rackham.

In sharp contrast to those seven intellectual mystics or esoterics is the Old Guard of story-tellers : the generation that did its best work in the forty years beginning at about the year 1890, that generation which excelled in the art of narrative, in the craft of the very readable tale, the generation that, practising the profession of authorship, believed, like the members of any other honourable profession, in discharging its duties capably and honestly. Although their merits and their standards differ widely, the following seven writers have all worked competently, several of them brilliantly, in their different *genres* : R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Eden Phillpotts, E. F. Benson, Horace Annesley Vachell, A. E. W. Mason, Henry Seton Merriman, Oliver Onions. Of these the greatest is Cunninghame Graham ; the least worldly-successful, Onions. Whether in his deliberately dour and understated Scottish tales or in his coloured, yet still restrained, stories of Spain, Central and South America, Cunninghame Graham combines the often opposed instead of the advisably complementary virtues of strength and dignity, irresistible power and unfailing polish. An adventurous Romantic in his life, he wrote as a Classic ; a very Conquistador, an anachronistic knight, he towered, black-caped and picturesquely sombrero'd, above the Bloomsbury hirsutes and the Chelsea *poseurs*, the effete intellectuals and the impotent æsthetes. An insatiable traveller, he wrote picaresquely of strange places and stranger men. The greatest Scottish writer since Robert Louis Stevenson.

Eden Phillpotts obtained a flattering success in two comedies, *The Farmer's Wife* and *Yellow Sands*, but his best



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work is to be found in his more serious fiction, although he has written several delightful novels and short-story volumes in a lighter vein. His pictures of Devonian and Cornish life will, some day, be valued by the historian of those fast-disappearing phases and sections of English life, but we need not, should not, wait until that perhaps distant time before we quietly enjoy his very shrewd and racy portraits of the 'characters' and of the general character of the South-West. When he sets himself to it, Phillpotts excels also in narrative, and always he excels in painting the landscape of the two counties he knows best. A most able psychologist, he treats lust and treachery and cruelty and dishonesty and pettiness with a rare power and with a tolerance that, without implying condonation, manifests a pitiful understanding, but he also displays mastery when he writes of love and good faith and kindness and honesty and magnanimity. At his most eloquent, he is a very considerable stylist : witness, to take but one example, *The Secret Woman*.

E. F. Benson is, in my opinion, the best writer of the Benson male trio. More viable and accessible than Robert Hugh Benson (now remembered only for his general mysticism and religious esotericism and for the particular merit of his ablest piece of creative work, *The Angel of Pain*), more popular and less persistently and obtrusively literary and scholarly than Arthur Christopher Benson (the 'Mr Christopher' of Shane Leslie's Eton novel, *The Oppidan*), he has, in his fiction, artfully concealed his excellent scholarship, his basic scholarliness—two qualities that advantageously appear in his biographies. That he is a belletrist no less capable than A. C. Benson he has proved in, for example, *The Book of the Months*, which, much in its origination and a little in its sentiment, recalls

*Aftermath*, that exquisite sequel to James Lane Allen's *The Scarlet Cardinal*, than which, however, it is better written and more manly and more truly possessed of the sense of the Virgilian *lachrymæ rerum*. Rendered famous overnight by his *Dodo*, he has written many other Society novels, at once perceptive and penetrating. In his David Blaize stories, he records, sympathetically and most readably, his schooldays and his Cambridge days ; in the latter novel, by the way, he paints a lively portrait of the scintillating middle-age of that too little appreciated historian and over-publicized eccentric, Oscar Browning. Where he touches upon the mysterious and the supernatural, he shows much of Algernon Blackwood's subtlety. E. F. is the most honest and the most talented of the Benson brothers. That talent reappears in the work of their relative, Stella Benson, distinctive and original poet and prose-writer ; her premature death deprived us of a potential front-ranker.

Beginning with several sensational novels (*The Sword of Damocles*, for instance), H. A. Vachell suddenly achieved popularity in his Harrow schoolboy romance, *The Hill*, which he continued in the better written, less known *John Charity*. Something of the same kind of hero-villain dichotomy recurs in *Brothers*. Of his post-fraternal work, probably the most popular is the 'Quinneys' series of novels and short stories, but he has done superior work in the more serious novels. Vachell has a whimsical, tolerant wit and a notable understanding of hope and aspiration, fear and doubt, kindness and self-interest ; and his perfectly hidden competency and craftsmanship render him eminently readable by the many and delightful to the connoisseur. Moreover, he frequently astonishes even the most faithful readers with his unexpectedness. Who

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ted, who suspected that he could write *Martha* ?

se H. A. Vachell, A. E. W. Mason represents a period gracious than our own in manners and in mode of His most popular novels are *The Four Feathers*, *The m Road*, and the Hanaud detective-novels. Very striking such stories as *No Other Tiger* and *They Would Not be smen*, sublimated melodramas, and such romances as *inda of the Balcony*. But he has never surpassed *Clemen-* that exquisite, deeply moving historical romance with admirable plot, the distinguished dialogue, the rose-et yet uncloying, unmawkish sentiment. *Clementina* y or may not have sprung from the Stanley Weyman dition (*Under the Red Robe*, *A Gentleman of France*, *Count nnibal*), it is certainly superior to the best Weyman ; s also superior to Booth Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire* d falls not very far short of Meredith's unforgettable ort novel, *The Tale of Chloe*. Like E. F. Benson, Mason a write history that, although not of Lord Acton's ndard, is reasonably accurate and quite unreasonably ertaining. He may owe something to the fictional mode Sir Gilbert Parker and Henry Seton Merriman, but he even more readable, and a better craftsman. No other nglish novelist has so remarkably combined the gift of opular readability with that of a true, unmeretricious istinction of morals and literary manners : born relater f tales, he has a distinctive and distinguished mind and a ice sense of epigram, point, antithesis. How manly yet attractive his men, how witty yet lovable his women ! Of E. W. Mason, even more than of E. F. Benson and A. Vachell, it may be truly said that, at a loss to know what to read, you have only to pick up a book that bears his name and you will, at the least, find clean (not inept

nor unadult) and entertaining (not merely interesting) matter ; and the cultured, the educated, the mentally matured reader will, every now and then despite the fact that he is reading a ' straight ', not a social nor doctrinaire nor thesistic novel, meet, to his unthinking surprise or to his expected delight, a profound aside, a masterly *aperçu*, a penetrating observation, an astringently witty remark.

Henry Seton Merriman tells almost as good a story as Weyman or Mason, although he lacks the historic and dramatic swiftness of the former and the intellectual distinction, the warm humanity of the latter ; but his perspicuous narrative and lucid, pointed style still render him extremely readable ; some of his aphorisms and epigrams achieve an incisive and memorable brevity. And recalling Mason : several of Mason's heroes might easily have been Merriman's too.

Of Oliver Onions it is more difficult to speak. My earliest experience of this original, uneven, idiosyncratic novelist and short-story writer was a youthful reading of *The Compleat Bachelor*. Like Machen, Onions has never been adequately recognized, sufficiently praised ; though in the predominant English sense ' appreciated ' by the few, he has never, in the etymological, the Walter Pater sense, been duly, carefully ' appreciated '. His outstanding achievement is a trilogy on the theme of murder ; psychologically, that theme has never been better handled ; the ghastly naturalness and the tense, long-deferred inevitability of the slowly gathering proof that ' murder will out ' have never been equalled. Onions possesses an odd, at times disconcerting style and an odd, not easily deducible attitude towards life (which, by the way, has slightly embittered him) ; he has firmly refused to write conventionally or popularly. He is no escapist romancer, no

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moon-glamoured Romantic ; on the other hand, he is too sharply individualist to accept the Classical criteria of literary composition. Yet he richly repays a leisurely, sympathetic reading.

Almost too abrupt a contrast is supplied by the suave, mellifluous modernity of Compton Mackenzie, who nevertheless can, the mood seizing him, diverge into satire that is either amaritudinously pungent, trenchant, caustic, or slap-stickishly, rollickingly, ludicrously farcical. His early *Sinister Street* has been bettered only in certain passages in the too elaborate, at times almost alembicated and at other times irrefutably tenuous novel-series, *The Four Winds of Love*, and in several chapters of his book of Mediterranean memories. Perhaps he would have acted more wisely to surrender himself utterly to his pursuit of beauty and to that romantic-tending enchantment which he expresses, here and there, in *Fairy Gold*, and, at the same time, to write both with that polished charm and correctness, and with that elfin loveliness of which he knows, too seldom exploits, the secret. Compton Mackenzie is an idealistic sophisticate ; his urbane, unmetallic sophistication has never blinded him to 'the glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome'.

Something Byronic lingers in Mackenzie ; and also, though less noticeably, in Richard Aldington, who has likewise written exquisitely and virile-feelingly of Greece and Italy and the Mediterranean isles, which, to them in their uncritical moments, are as the Islands of the Blest, where winds blow ever halcyon, skies are always as blue as that supposedly cerulean-constant, intraterrene sea. Mostly has Aldington told, sub-acidly or acidly, of love frustrated or unsatisfyingly incomplete, of worthy ambitions fate-cheated or man-destroyed, of integrity flouted

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and scorned, of innocence betrayed, of happiness carked and corroded with economic necessity or human treachery or life's ineptitude. He vigorously satirizes injustice, stupidity, cruelty, narrow-mindedness : which is good. Often he angrily satirizes these things : which detracts from the effectiveness of his satire. Exquisite and scholarly translator from the Classics and from modern European classics, conversant with literature and language as he proves in his own poetry, he can write with a rare beauty of love and friendship and with a rare conviction of courage and fortitude. At his best, he is very good indeed ; at his angriest, he is irritating—yet refreshing. He often expresses himself vehemently because he feels indignantly, and he feels indignantly because he feels deeply. His scholarship has not devitalized him. Personally, he is a good-humoured, entertaining and witty companion ; he writes equally witty and entertaining letters. In appearance and manner he is the opposite of that other scholar-writer with an honourable 1914-1918 war record, Herbert Read, who at one time belonged to the same school of poetry, the Imagists.

After the landmen, the seamen : Joseph Conrad, William McFee, Humfrey Jordan, who, in that order of chronology and merit, have, in the present century, ably continued the nautical tradition established by Tobias Smollett and the slight yet entertaining Captain John Davis, by Captain Marryat and that lesser novelist, Clark Russell. Conrad will never recover the fame he enjoyed in the ten years preceding his death, but his fame will outlive that of (say) Bennett, than whom he was a much greater stylist, a much richer and more complex personality, and a finer man. His sea-novels and short and

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-length stories will live, as may several of the post-he too psychological novels. *Typhoon* is the most icent, the most enduring storm-narrative in any ge : splendid in its truth, its force, its style. It is e dramatic than William Falconer's poem on the of a storm at sea. Like Proust, however, Conrad ered from being over-praised. He has one notable : William McFee ; who, nevertheless, avoids the of deliberate imitation and, profiting by his dis-, has emerged into an influenced independence, tyle, a method of composition, a characterization n. He is forceful yet subtle, strong yet distinctive ; much easier and, in general, rather more exciting han Conrad, McFee stands out as a novelist for -intelligent, for those who prefer dry champagne wit to broad humour, a skilfully conducted to a d narrative, a wide practical knowledge of men ien (studied psychologically also) to an entrail- of fabricated ingenuities and wire-drawings. He e seas and seamen, ports and agents and hangers- ss well and in no fewer countries than Conrad, he lacks that degree of power which could handle o as mightily, as realistically, as grandly as the a stylist, he lacks the Conradian grandeur, yet he ry well indeed. To McFee and Conrad, Humfrey owes nothing, and he belongs to a lower order. hat order, he is a convincing, most readable who, at the end of each novel, leaves us feeling ed and inspirited. He is particularly successful ting the viewpoint, the responsibilities and duties, ties and the rewards held, owed, felt, and received aptains of large ocean-going liners. different is James Hanley, one of a trio of authors

whose earliest writings belong to the second lustrum of the 1920's : H. E. Bates, Rhys Davies, and—the last to publish—Hanley himself. By no means all of Hanley's novels and short stories deal with the sea. But then, he has spent at sea a far shorter time than any of the nautical writers mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Volcanic, socialistic, incorrigibly primitive, he is yet not without his subtleties ; prone to extravagance and over-emphasis, he has three great virtues—sincerity, power, social pity.

At the opposite pole stands H. E. Bates, one of Mr Jonathan Cape's discoveries. Better short-storyist than novelist, very much better novelist than literary critic, he excels in delicate anatomies of the rural scene and of the characters that invest the countryside with tang and humour. In the short story he has rarely improved upon ' The Child ', which appeared in *Seven Tales and Alexander* (1929), but his post-1930 novels mark a considerable advance upon those published in the earlier period. At one time he was in some danger of becoming a mannered, pretty-pretty Ruritanian, but the Second World War has confirmed him in his increasing freedom from that fatal weakness and hardened him into the author of several admirable little books he has written during his service as an Official Observer in the Public Relations Directorate of the Air Ministry : there, he has shown a mastery of the Oliver Cromwell *cum* Defoe *cum* Edward James Trelawney *cum* Hugh Miller *cum* Maurice Hewlett (in his restrained, ' Saxon ' phase) sort of English.

Rhys Davies won a *succès d'estime* with his first book—a novel entitled *The Withered Root*, which overflowed with Celtic passion and poetry and which, despite its immaturities, remains a lovely and almost unbearably moving story of aspiration world-foiled and fate-defeated, told



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with Cymric ardour and in a prose that, both in its rhythms and in its fervid metaphors, trenches upon the domains of verse. Since those days he has matured and enriched and strengthened his art, not only in the novel but also in the short story. He has never quite achieved the worldly success of H. E. Bates, but he is a virile stylist in particular and a very moving writer in general, with a fine intellect and a tolerant mind and a delicate sensibility.

I am proud to have been, in a modest way, associated with the fostering and encouraging of the early Bates and Davies and Hanley : and I know which of the three will the most generously admit my exiguous claim. A friend of mine, Alan Steele, did far more than I to assist these three writers during the first five or six years of their authorship ; another friend, John Brophy, encouraged and helped James Hanley during the stressful early days of his literary career. It is—from the viewpoint of future biographers—unfortunate, injudicious, short-sighted of writers to withhold information of their non-monetary debts to fosterers and assisters. Yet many do. The most generous acknowledgement that I have ever received came from Neil Bell, who, as his friends know, is as generous-minded as he is open-handed. Yet, to avoid misapprehension, I hasten to add that I have never sought such acknowledgement, by authors, of the mere fact that I was able to discern their merits. Nor have I desired it, for from the acts themselves I have derived more gratification than I have any right to feel.

Mention of James Hanley reminds me of the work of several English and American 'toughies'. Liam O'Flaherty, whom I met once or twice in or about 1929 ; Graham Greene, the better of whose novels far tran-

scend the standards, the themes, the merits of this group ; Horace McCoy, James Cain, Jonathan Latimer. Liam O'Flaherty served in the British Expeditionary Force during the war of 1914-1918 : and melodramatically fictionized his experiences in a book to which he gave the apt title, *The Return of the Brute*, where he owed something to the diminution-plot of Philip MacDonald's *Patrol*. He has written several powerful novels and many fine short stories ; yet since 1935 he has done very little. Graham Greene, some years younger, has gone contrary to his educational training and his dignified journalistic associations by writing books some of which are conveniently classified as ' tough '. Greene writes well, with restrained power, and a very sure sense of melodrama ; he excels in a swift-moving, blood-stirring episode. Although this novelist is uncompromisingly realistic, the percipient reader has no great difficulty in discerning the idealist and the poet. It would not astonish me if Graham Greene became a very important figure in the annals of the English novel ; he is already one of our best contemporary novelists, and perhaps his most moving book is *The Power and the Glory*. He is big. Bigger than any of the writers mentioned in the ensuing paragraph. But before that paragraph gets itself written, I should like to mention two English novelists that are ' tough ' only in the senses that they are devastatingly honest and forthright, that they make no attempt to harrow our feelings, that they write realistically, not sentimentally : Joyce Cary, whose first novel appeared in 1932, and F. L. Green, whose first came two years later : the former is the subtler, the latter the more powerful : observation, psychology, divagation predominate in Cary, and emotionally tense situation, strong action in Green : at close grips, intellectual no less

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than physical, with life, these two writers are important, although Green has, I feel, the greater potentialities.

James Cain's work, especially *The Postman Always Knocks Twice*, closely resembles that of Horace McCoy (for example, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*). Both of these men have the knack of the 'tough and rough', expressed with a neat brutality and an 'attractive' callousness : but when one has read two or three novels in this *genre*, one has, in essence, read all of them. Jonathan Latimer has tried his hand at the *genre* ; very successfully, as might be expected of so versatile, so able a novelist ; yet I prefer him in such a book as *Dark Memory*. One of the best of these 'tough' novels is *The Antagonists*, by Paul Hervey Fox, for its psychology is excellent and its author is a man worth following. But—to emphasize the point—this type of writing quickly wearies even the insensitive reader, for, by its self-imposed limitations, it not only excludes so much that endues life with richness, depth, variety but also, in its style, is suicidally monotonous. Sensationalism defeats its own end : its first impact is tremendous, the second disappointing, the third a weariness to the mind and the heart. And when the sensational-callous novelist is lacking in both psychology and style, he rapidly fills the sensitive reader with tedium and disgust ; witness that writer who refused Miss Blandish the dubious consolation of even a few bespattered orchids. At the opposite pole to that unnamed sensationalist stands Richard Sale, author of *Not Too Narrow, Not Too Deep*, where the characters are, in the main, 'tough', and the action, in part, equally 'tough', but where the physical brutality and the moral insentience are profoundly and brilliantly juxtaposed against a radiant, courageous idealism and meliorism : a book that should on no account be missed, for, in its

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finally Messianic theme, it constitutes a spiritual revelation and, in its mystical overtones, it operates a psychic experience. A very original writer, and a most poignant.

From the 'tough' we may pass to a few greater American novelists. Theodore Dreiser is turgid in style, turbid emotionally and chaotic mentally; in which faults he bears a startlingly close resemblance to a number of German novelists of this century. He simply does not understand the virtues implied, as well as those inculcated, in the Greek proverb, *μηδὲν ἄγαν* or 'Nothing too much'. From which it may be gathered that at least one student of literature deems him to be vastly over-rated. His most famous novel, *An American Tragedy*, abounds in unconscious indications of his own.

A more important writer is John Dos Passos, who would, I think, have been wise to keep to his early manner and to develop it, rather than to work so brilliantly in the cinematic or 'shot'-serial mode, which better suits a theatrical or impressionistic presentation than it does fiction. (John Brophy, in trying his hand at this method, has achieved a dazzling *tour de force*; he has tried it only once.)

In *Main Line West* Paul Horgan effected a compromise between the conventional and the cinematic modes so successfully that this America-revelatory book has received much well-merited praise. Yet how much better he is in *A Lamp in the Plain*, grandly conceived, executed nobly, strongly written and tenderly meditated! Here is a divinatorily sympathetic picture of childhood and adolescence; here, a realist-romantic visualization of youth's uncertainties and doubts, joys and ecstasies, struggles and triumphs, in a setting for the most part rural, with the countryside and the county life treated vigorously

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and picturesquely. Beside this magnificent, human, inspiring book, Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* appears inchoate and obscurantist, drab and dull. Horgan is in the great tradition : unlike Upton Sinclair and Dreiser, he does not subordinate a melodramatic story to an ill-digested thesis ; unlike Dos Passos and, in the short story, Saroyan, he has not gone whoring after platinum gods and ephemeral modes ; he has maintained a poise and a dignity, a sense of beauty and wonderment and keen appreciativeness amid the kaleidoscopic, ever-shifting welter of so much—fortunately not all—of ‘ the American scene ’.

At roughly the same time as *A Lamp in the Plain*, there appeared Robert Carson's *The Revels Are Ended* (compare Hugh Kimber's title, *Time to Stop Laughing*). I have read no other book by the author of *The Revels Are Ended*, but if I come upon one, I shall seize it avidly—in the hope that it will be as good. Carson gazes into the heart of the matter and has a profound insight into Unamuno's ‘ tragic sense of life ’. Here is realism employed in the cause of an idealistic fortitude and an unflinching courage, two heroic virtues that stand out, luminously, against a sombre background of callous deeds and brutal words ; a greater novel than any by the already mentioned American and English ‘ toughies ’, it would, to the comparative student of fiction, offer a piquant comparison with Sale's *Not Too Narrow, Not Too Deep*.

Horgan's and Carson's power and a social pity even deeper and farther-reaching than theirs inform the work of John Steinbeck, greatest of all those American novelists who have begun to publish their work in the post-1918 period. He has three distinct manners : the cool, detached, gently ironic manner of that early historical

novel, *The Cup of Gold*; the related manner—cool, detached, but dynamically and vehemently ironic—of *The Moon Goes Down*, which, with admirable impartiality yet with the implicitly most damning contempt, describes a phase, an instance, of the German invasion and occupation of Norway; and the social-pitiful manner of those two great books, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, of which the latter forms a powerful example of the relentlessly sociological novel and the former a tragic-themed story perhaps better adjudged to be, not at all a novel of social pity, but very much a ‘straight’ novel upon a painfully moving subject—‘The best laid plans o’ mice and men gang aft agley’, inexorably and powerfully conveyed by the vehicle of the two skilfully paired, faultlessly contrasted friends. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck cut off such a slice of history as will long be valued and consulted by historians, but as a novel it is inferior to *Of Mice and Men*; one could wish that he would leave sociology to lesser novelists.

From Steinbeck to the detective novel (or ‘the deteccer’, as, once upon a time, an Oxford undergraduate called it) is too far a cry to please the carping critic. But why trouble to please him?

The detective novel has, since the early 1920’s, much interested me, but I have so far resisted the temptation to essay the *genre*, which is easy to write passably, very difficult to write well. My taste for it sprang, maybe, from an addiction, at the age of ten–twelve, to the Sherlock Holmes stories; some I read from a volume upon my father’s shelves and some in *The Strand Magazine*.

The finest novel of detection written in the 20th Century is E. C. Bentley’s *Trent’s Last Case*, which appeared in

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1913 ; the very much later *Trent's Own Case* is not quite so good, despite its ingenuity and its impressive competence. *Trent's Last Case*, logically impeccable, moves to its startling conclusion with the majestic inevitability of the Nile and, being the work of a most distinguished mind, it carries itself with an air of great intellectual distinction. Nothing like it had been written before, nothing quite like it has been written since 1913. It is the most intellect-satisfying 'detccecr' of all ; even the two or three best things done by Edgar Allan Poe were, in this respect, its inferiors.

Early on to the detective field came Agatha Christie ; along with her we may briefly consider four other women writers : Dorothy Sayers, Margery Allingham, Ngaio Marsh, and M. G. Eberhart. Thanks to the comfortable impossibility of refuting well-established chronology, Mrs Christie is indisputably the pioneer among these women novelists who have specialized in the detective novel. Without possessing Dorothy Sayers's education, culture, style and intellectual grasp, she is her superior in the sheer art of detection ; but whereas Agatha Christie writes the more readable 'detccecrs', Dorothy Sayers writes the better novels. For general entertainment, Agatha Christie has written nothing comparable with *Murder Must Advertise*, nor anything so impressive as *The Nine Tailors*, nor anything so atmospherically psychological as *Gaudy Night*. On the other hand, Dorothy Sayers has never, in detection pure but not so simple, quite equalled *The Case of Roger Ackroyd*. Nor does Agatha Christie lack a shrewd psychology and a sense of atmosphere—witness *Murder in Mesopotamia*. The conception of Monsieur Hercule Poirot has more originality than has that of Peter Wimsey, who, like the detecting hero of Margery Allingham's stories,

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stems (as Americans would say) from Sherlock Holmes : all three English investigators are elegant and nonchalant *poseurs*, carrying lightly a vast erudition and an encyclopædic knowledgeableness ; they are blasé and bored, yet almost superhumanly alert ; slim, almost frail, they have ' muscles of steel ' and ' nerves of iron ', and a pretty knowledge of ju-jitsu ; danger may dispel some of their well-bred boredom, but it is powerless against their imperturbable and endearing gentlemanliness ; their humour is dry, their wit is drawlingly brilliant and, usually, barbed ; a deprecatory courage and a self-depreciatory fortitude never fail them ; courteous to all, they are gallant—never rakish—towards the ladies. Margery Allingham's hero is an attractive fellow, with much of Wimsey's whimsicality ; and, like Dorothy Sayers, she writes an excellent novel that is neither merely incidentally nor yet predominantly devoted to detection. For some odd reason, few people realize that these two women began to publish fiction at approximately the same time ; Dorothy Sayers much the more quickly became famous.

In Ngaio Marsh (as also in ' Michael Innes ' ) we find a different type of detection by an official investigator of the same social class as Sherlock Holmes and the Sayers and Allingham detectors ; a C.I.D. inspector, upper middle-class, university-educated, ' quite devastatingly efficient, my dear ', yet, off duty, cultured and allusive and witty, courteous and attractive. A New Zealander (*Ngaio*, by the way, is borrowed from the musical Maori tongue and pronounced *Njó*), she has laid the scene of several novels in her homeland, but her best stories are English-scened. Like Dorothy Sayers, she scrupulously and thoroughly studies and lives the *milieux* she employs,



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theatrical, artistic, what have you, and, again like Dorothy Sayers, she enlists a collaborator where she feels herself incompetent to handle the technics and special knowledge required. Less literary than Dorothy Sayers, she has a shrewder eye for character ; so far she has essayed nothing so ambitious as *The Nine Tailors* or *Gaudy Night*, and I, for one, have no wish to see her try—she is very well as she is.

M. G. Eberhart is the only American woman writer of detective novels to be mentioned in detail here. (Phoebe Atwood Taylor is good, but too regional. Carolyn Wells is a trifle slapdash. Emma Lee Thayer is always readable.) In the power of suggesting atmosphere, she is the equal of any of the other women figuring in these pages, and in this respect her only female superior is that uncanny writer of atmospheric ' thrillers ', Ethel Lina White, who, if she would but set herself to improve her style, could aspire to a modest seat in the porch of the house built by Poe and enlarged by Bierce and adorned by Algernon Blackwood. M. G. Eberhart tells an excellent story, draws an acute pen-portrait, has an enviable understanding of the female heart.

Two of her compatriots have enjoyed considerable popularity in Britain : ' S. S. Van Dine ', whose premature death—he was but fifty years of age—came in 1939, and ' Ellery Queen '. Van Dine's investigator is Sayers-erudite, and indeed Van Dine errs in a too constant exhibition of either recondite or esoteric learning, with the result that he could not hold the attention of the averagely educated and the sparsely cultured. The Van Dine detector shared other qualities with the heroes in Dorothy Sayers's and Margery Allingham's novels : he was financially independent, very much a gentleman

(distinguished of person, the incarnation of courtesy), somewhat above 'the madding crowd', appreciably withdrawn from the vulgar hurly-burly of the struggle for life. But Van Dine was a master of the intricate story, a prestidigitator of conflicting motives, a skilled unraveller of skeins almost excessively tangled.

'Ellery Queen' (two men with but a single name) has developed his art—varied, suppld, strengthened it; mellowed it, and humanized. Already he has caught up with Van Dine in the power to deal lucidly with the obscure and to invest the incidents, the mounting climax, the crashing *dénouement* with a convincing atmosphere that sometimes is delicately pervasive, sometimes gripping and powerful. The combination of Queen *père*, shrewd and persistent superintendent in the Homicide Squad, with the studious, damnably deductive Queen *fils*, was a good idea and an excellent point of departure, although Ellery is equally effective when he works alone. There is little doubt that 'Ellery Queen' deserves the reputation of being the best of all the American writers of detective fiction.

There are numerous other Americans writing detective novels that are thoroughly readable, but they are not 'S. S. Van Dines' nor 'Ellery Queens': Raymond Chandler, Erle Stanley Gardner, Milton Propper, Rex Stout, for instance. Of these, the second, with his *Perry Mason*, is the best known, but I find his stories rather machine-made. Rex Stout, whether operating through Nero Wolfe or through Tecumseh Fox, I think a better writer of less, much less, perfunctory tales. And Chandler applies the methods of the 'toughies' to the craft of detective fiction, employs an agreeably fallible, reassuringly ordinary little man as his 'hero', and wisecracks

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adroitly and entertainingly ; he has emerged as the best of these four writers.

A Canadian also has 'made good' along a line of his own. Daly King, both in his earlier or Obelist stories and in his longer, post-Obelist period, has succeeded in imparting vitality to the psychological-*cum*-psychiatrist detection of crime. He has tried it the hard way, nor has he quite mastered his medium : he carries his learning rather heavily and sometimes forgets that not all his readers are students of neuroses and psychoses, complexes and compensations, inhibitions and fixations : he must write more clearly, less pretentiously, before he can reach the very high place to which his potentialities entitle him.

With the presumptive, often presumptuous claims of psychiatry as made by Daly King (on whom the allurements of Freudian short-cuts were perhaps exercised at the height of their vogue and at his most impressionable period), it is profitable to contrast the sober chemical—and other—reactions, the quiet and mellow, patient and tolerant mode and literary manners of Austin Freeman's Dr Thorndike and J. J. Connington's researchers and Chief Constable. These two writers possess, the former an adequate, the latter a formidable, scientific knowledge, which they employ in a not oppressively technical manner and with a not too insistent, nor too lengthy, frequency. Their novels, containing a number of exciting incidents, are yet emotionally moderate and common-sensible, the authors preferring restraint and understatement to luxuriance and over-emphasis. Both of these writers have won in the United States such a reputation as one would not have expected for their quietness and their lack of sensationalism. ('Which just goes to show that you never can tell !')

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That sobriety appears also in the work of the Coles, John Rhode, and Freeman Wills Crofts : factuality and matter-of-factness dominate imagination and fancy. All 'three' are honest craftsmen. Crofts is superior to the Cole partnership (intelligence and learning married to intelligence and charm) and to John Rhode (systematic, unerring detection somewhat marred by an undistinguished style), for in *The Cask* he has written one of the criminological masterpieces of the century. He concentrates on the theme of detection and on close-weaving his plot ; within this austere exclusiveness, which debars picturesque heroes, divinatory cogitations, witty dialogues, purple-passaged dramas, he has succeeded in engaging and holding our attention and in fascinating us with the minuteness and the care, the relentlessness and the single-mindedness, the intelligence and the certainty with which the criminal is pursued, the clues gathered, the proofs assembled.

Less disciplinary, more imaginative is E. R. Punshon, some of whose detective novels are in the partially-straight-novel tradition (if it be old enough to merit that dignified term) of Dorothy Sayers, Margery Allingham, 'Michael Innes'. Punshon lacks the cogency of Freeman Wills Crofts, the mastery shown by 'Ellery Queen', the literary quality of Dorothy Sayers and 'Michael Innes', the intellectual impeccability of E. C. Bentley, the erudition of 'Van Dine' : 'withouts', however, constitute a merely negative criticism ; positively, Punshon is a pleasant, very readable novelist.

Pleasant, too, is Philip MacDonald, who, distinguished, able and witty, might have served as the prototype of his own brilliantly detectival Colonel. His *Patrol* stands out as one of the best books on the war of 1914-

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1918, and memories of his noteworthy war-record recur in several of his later novels. It is not incontestable that his gentleman detective, urbane and charming, cool and brave, cultured and epigrammatic, may have influenced the above-mentioned women's so very chivalrous and courteous heroes. MacDonald is an excellent teller of thrilling tales. His dialogue is as natural as it is entertaining. Always and, as it were, inevitably, the discerning reader forms the impression that here is an engaging personality, expressing itself easily and clearly and readably, occasionally with a delightful witticism or a burnished, yet spontaneous epigram. I once heard him speak at a Whitefriars Club ladies-night dinner, with easy distinction and well-bred wit.

Not to enter into a catalogue of detective-story writers in this random series of cursory impressions, I shall, not improperly, end with a brief mention of three extremely intelligent, highly cultured, well-educated, æsthetically and morally sensitive, intellectually and spiritually perceptive writers that are justly famous or, at the least, deservedly notable in other *genres*, other subjects: 'Francis Iles' is that stimulating economist and polymath, A. B. Cox; 'Nicholas Blake' is the Leftist, modernist poet, C. Day Lewis; and 'Michael Innes' is John Innes Mackintosh Stewart, who, after a lectureship in an English university, became Jury Professor of English Literature in the University of Adelaide, a chair that, long occupied by Sir Archibald Strong, has a fine tradition of scholarship to maintain—and is maintaining it.

Francis Iles's stories are rather murder-stories than detection-stories. They are diabolically clever, cleverly natural, their psychology deft and terse, faultless and strong; the style simple, pellucid, the composition subtle

in its clarity and in its surface simplicity. But 'Francis Iles' is only one of Mr Cox's pseudonyms, for this multiple personality releases another ego under the name of 'Anthony Berkeley', author of tales less caviarish than those of 'Francis Iles'. It is nevertheless as 'Francis Iles' that he has ranged himself beside E. C. Bentley, Dorothy Sayers, 'Ellery Queen', 'Michael Innes'.

'Nicholas Blake' has so far done nothing to challenge Francis Iles's two remarkable crime-stories (of which *Malice Aforethought* is perhaps the better) and the two or three best of 'Michael Innes's', but that he may do so, I should certainly not deny. Like 'Michael Innes' he revels, though not quite so facilely nor so apposite-felicitously nor yet so frequently, in literary allusion; and, like Dorothy Sayers, he has at least once indulged himself and delighted his educated readers by prefixing a quotation to every chapter. At present he is a shade too ready to interpret emotional constants in the terms of some fashionable, transitory psychology; and he has much to learn from (say) Graham Greene in the art of subordinating his violently Leftist ideology to the needs of literary art, in ironically implying rather than angrily and dogmatically asserting his socialistic beliefs, and in remembering that intellectual bluster carries less conviction than spiritual undertones. Nevertheless, 'Nicholas Blake' is witty, trenchant, entertaining, with a dry, sometimes a wry, humour; he has the gift of narrative more highly developed than have most intellectual novelists. It is my belief that, unless life embitters him still more, he will some day write several arresting 'straight' novels and several pre-eminent detective stories; also that, in poetry, he may come to rival, or come very close to rivalling, Stephen Spender in poetic dignity, Auden in potent



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eschewed the fault of ' sending a man on a boy's errand ' similar to the ' errands ' in *Stop Press* and *There Came Both Mist and Snow*. But in *Appleby on Ararat* and *The Daffodil Case*, ' Michael Innes ' has displayed such brilliance of fantasy, such fertile wittiness, and such power that we know the very great promise of *Lament for a Maker* to be gradually fulfilling itself in an achievement as artistically memorable as it will be intellectually exciting.



## CHAPTER II

### *Comradeship, Friendship, and Love*

**I**N three terms of service—two in the Army, one in the Royal Air Force—I have, or like to think I have, gathered sufficient intangible evidence upon which to say something not (I hope) too fatuous about comradeship, that generalized sentiment which is, in part, a gregarious feeling of more-than-acquaintance yet less-than-friendship.

In comradeship there subsists a modicum of collective security, of corporate life, of interdependability and inter-reliability; comradeship exists among the members of a tent or a hut, of an office or workshop or a section, of a company, even of a battalion or a battery or an Air Force squadron or a warship. Within that larger comradeship, there thrive numerous smaller, stronger comradeships between groups of men (and of women too). A small fortuitous concourse of persons may be thrown together by the strange force of whimsical circumstance or at the unconscious behest of authority: initially they are of disparate temperaments and multi-various characters and vocations; at first, they may—usually they do—have very little in common, and it will take a week or two for innate antipathies and obscure prejudices to become enfeebled and thus facilitate the emergence of their common humanity, common needs and common hopes and fears, pleasures and pains. There arises a general realization of the salutary truism that ‘it takes all sorts to make a world’, whence it is a short step for the members



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In the closer, more intimate associations between two or among several men, comradeship, besides possessing the communal characteristics and virtues, will attract to itself a sympathy stronger than that subsisting collectively among the members of the circumscribed society, a deeper understanding too, and also a more strongly based affection : three emotions and attitudes that prompt men to a very high degree of mutual assistance, of selflessness, and of self-sacrifice.

To those who know not comradeship, especially that existing in the combatant Services, these reflections may seem too much generalized and somewhat ethereal, but in those who know it by personal experience they will evoke particularities and recall objective memories. Perhaps the former cannot be convinced, certainly the latter need no convincing. The latter have witnessed or experienced such acts as these : a comrade, whether friendly or indifferent or even antipathetic, giving his last mugful of water and pretending that his water-bottle was almost full ; or helping another to complete his task after he himself had completed his ; or, from a just-opened parcel, handing to a ' pal ' more than remained for himself, or, more often, so distributing its contents that his own share was less than that of any of his beneficiaries ; or tending a sick man with the care, the well-concealed tenderness, of a good nurse. It were idle to enumerate the myriad examples.

In all comradeship there obviously resides the germ of friendship. In a Service, all friends are also comrades ; something of this fact, something about comradeship and something about friendship, will be found, generously though meiosistically expressed, in Edward Thompson's *These Men, Thy Friends*. Many a man has risked death for

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a friend, not necessarily to save his very life but perhaps merely to render him some little service or in the discharge of some incidental duty that he could easily have evaded. Of friendship in general, so much has been written that I should be foolish to attempt to say something new. That the need of companionship enters into the birth and growth of friendship need not be denied ; nor that friends occasionally treat each other selfishly. But the Freudian thesis of subconscious sexual desire or, at the least, sexual interest does not bear analysis ; nor does the cynical thesis of mutual profit. If either sexuality or selfishness predominates, then the sentiment informing the relationship, and the relationship itself, cannot justly be designated Friendship.

In some ways, friendship is a greater—as it is so often a much more lasting—relationship and association than love. A comprehending, sympathetic friendship falls not subject to the vagaries of love, which, whatever else it may (and should) be, is exposed to the passions of the fancy and the lusts of the body, whereas friendship, independent of the tidal waves of the flesh and its unreason, cannot be so swayed. Friendship for one person often subsists by the side of love for another, but two loves, in the few persons capable of two loves \* (in contradistinction to two passions, two lusts), rarely exist long without one of them impinging disastrously upon the other and bringing grief and pain and perhaps also regret to two or, usually, all three of the parties concerned ; two friendships can exist and felicitously survive, side by side and, very often, complementarily. Friendship is more tolerant, more patient than any love except the very finest and noblest ; less exclusive

\* Which, the writer believes, cannot co-exist in a predominantly spiritual and intellectual person, whether man or woman.

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and preclusive. Free of the turpitudes and treacheries of the body, friendship soars to spiritual heights rarely transcended by love itself : how often has love inspired greater poetry than Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and Maurice Baring's lovely elegy? Is Bourdillon's justly famous love-lyric more exquisite than William Cory's *Heraclitus*? Although love has the greater warmth, a warmth that consists of and springs from a physical sensation, friendship—contrary to the general opinion—has the less intermittent, the deeper tenderness, unless the love be predominantly spiritual. In friendship there resides a stronger and a purer altruism than is normally present in love. In friendship there are a less vulnerable camaraderie and, usually, a firmer comradeship ; more of give-and-take. In no respect does friendship wane, grow dimmer, cooler with age, whereas, after a certain point, love inevitably diminishes in its physical sensations and manifestations : friendship may begin long before love has become possible and endure long after love will have ceased to be, in its fullest sense, practicable—not that love, in its spiritual aspects, may not endure unto death. Perhaps, however, it is unfair to love, to compare it at all with friendship, for love has that additional, almost incalculable and partly incomprehensible element of physical attraction. Yet a sage has averred that the human scene exhibits no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for a friend : and the rebuttal of the statement that only love seeks constantly to help and please and comfort lies in the equally valid statement that true friendship seeks precisely the same ends. Nevertheless, love is more alert, more sensitive to the loved one's needs and troubles than friendship is to the friend's.

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‘ Love is more intimate than friendship ’ ; yet, mentally, friendship can be at least as intimate as love—with less risk either of giving intellectual or spiritual offence or of jarring an æsthetic sensitiveness and delicacy ; it is on the spiritual plane that love excels friendship in potential intimacy. Whereas friendship is sensitive, love tends to be hypersensitive ; the former stands firmly upon a broad base, the latter balances precariously upon a razor-edge, delight on one side, disgust on the other ; on the one side, comfort and well-being and an inexplicable other-worldliness ( ‘ all this and heaven too ’ ), and on the other, an intense moral discomfort, a pervasive malaise, and a psychological hell-upon-earth.

Love’s proponents affirm, even asseverate, that physical intimacy provides them with free entry into a world of keen and heady pleasures and a liberating, enriching joy ; its opponents say that physical intimacy is a privilege mankind shares with the beasts of the field (and the jungle) and the birds of the air, and that friendship is therefore superior, for although it lacks the cherishing intoxications of love, it is also free of its limitations, its pains, its distresses.

Yet love’s eulogizers and disciples can justly retort that although its physical joys and pleasures, its corporeal happiness, could perhaps be intellectually condemned if the body were a water-tight compartment, those joys and pleasures are, in fact, not merely physical, body and mind and spirit being inextricably and most delicately interwoven. By the addition of body, with its titillatory and exquisitely responsive nerve-centres, love, say its panegyrists, has an incontestable, incalculable advantage ; embracing the physical, the mental, the moral and the spiritual, it is all-comprehensive and, thereby, superior to friendship, which excludes the physical.

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Here a demurrer ought to be entered, a modification of a previous statement should be made : in friendship there is, after all, a physical element. That element, however, is so different from the physical element and component of love, so much less possessive and compulsive, that it has rarely been recognized ; and, even when perceived, so inadequately, so prudishly, so unimaginatively, so shallowly recognized that a grave disservice has been done to the understanding of—and to the happiness and enjoyment derivable from—the noble sentiment, the unalloyed feeling and emotions that are friendship. Friendship between a man and a woman runs a continual risk of being, some would say, transformed, others would say adulterated or vitiated, by an upwelling, insurgent passion, which may either progress to love or regress, be debased, into lust.

But consider friendship between man and man, or that between woman and woman. (To assert that friendship between woman and woman is either impossible or, at best, frail and brittle is to range oneself alongside the irreflectively cynical and the irrevocably superficial.) A friendly arm about one's shoulders, a sympathetic hand-clasp, a palm gently pressed upon a knee, these simple, unthinking impulses and actions induce a feeling of consolation and comfort, of encouragement and mutual understanding : they dispel that chilling, heart-breaking loneliness and that disadvantageous segregation which constitute mankind's most insidious foe, most crushing and ponderous cross, and simultaneously they cheer and sustain. Over and above familial affection, there may be friendly affection between parent and child ; usually it is the parent who can the more easily forgo the parent-child relationship. That in this father-to-son, mother-to-

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daughter friendship there is, subconsciously and subliminally, a sexual element is a theory tenable only by Freudians ; that, except among the abnormal, a latent sexuality subsists in any friendship between mother and son, father and daughter, is a theory tenable only by diehard Freudians and distorted, perverted minds. The child or the parent draws consolation, comfort, encouragement, friendliness and sympathy from the human, non-sexual caress of the other : a warm companionship and a pervasive well-being emanate from this physical contiguity and this mental and spiritual communion. The feeling is unspoiled by possessive passion or libidinous desire.

A true, pure, single-hearted, life-lasting, undimmed and untarnished love is so rare that cynics irreflectively commit themselves to a pair of rash and excessive statements : that such love exists only in the minds of idealists or of sentimentalists, and that in all the other loves, brief and vastly more numerous, there is infinitesimal merit, little to treasure, but much of passion or novelty, of sheer human need, of the craving to possess a companion or a partner. It is not good for man or woman to live alone ; in the words of a once popular song, ' woman needs man, and man must have his mate '. Unless the two parties are—or become—good friends or, at the least, decidedly amicable companions, love is very unlikely to survive, for how can a passionate love endure without friendship ? One cannot be for ever, nor forever, passionate.

Brief love, however, may be its own justification. The idealists, like the sentimentalists, ask too much when they make of long continuance a requisite, a definition-term, of love : is not the duration, whether small or great, an incidental ? For love can be killed by things other than



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the tedium that springs from the sating, the glutting of passion : callousness, cruelty, æsthetic variance, cowardice or conventionality, mental disjunction, spiritual incompatibility, dishonesty, dishonourableness, fickleness and treachery, marked difference of social standing (the old *mésalliance*) or education or even culture, the failure of the husband to realize his wife's social or personal ambitions, a woman's inability to produce the child he would see in his own image, or a man's impotence—whether in the rare instance of complete impotence or in the much less rare instance of his inability to fertilize *her* body.

Here may be interposed a reminder that love and marriage need bear no relation, although normally marriage ensues upon love. Marriage may not be necessary for the continuance of love, but, to the mediocre, it supplies the best vehicle and medium and ambience for that continuance and for its fullest, ripest, sweetest self-expression : for the majority of men and women, marriage either destroys love or develops, variegates, fortifies it. If, as so frequently befalls, marriage destroys love between two mutually suitable persons, then that love is lacking in endurance, viability, adaptability, unselfishness, tolerance. But love, like passion and lust, is itself independent of marriage, and in itself not necessarily related thereto at all ; love and passion blow where they list—and their possèssèd (rather than possessors) with them. To condemn a married person because either a second love or several, perhaps even numerous, lusts come to him or her is tantamount to saying that a tiger sins when, for food, or in mere blood-lust or from habit, it kills a child. The animal in man—that is, the sexuality of men and women—is as morally irresponsible as a wild beast ; even love, in which sexual passion inevitably plays a dramatic rôle,

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is, in its origin and its incidence, the plaything of fate and circumstance, and often it has become firmly rooted before it is descried for what it is. Fortunately, by the experienced and even by the comparatively inexperienced man or woman that is introspective and self-critical, lust can be ruthlessly eradicated or presciently evaded, or, if it ascend to genuine passion, be escaped by the simple expedient of a running-away and the simple though difficult discipline of fortitude, self-derision, and a dour devotion to some intellectual or physical pursuit or, in the elect, to some spiritual exercise. The itch of lechery, the blinding heat of lust, the flame of passion, the onset ('the working of a god', as Euripides phrases it) or the gentle budding (the subtle alchemy) of love, all these processes originate from obscure potentialities and velleities and necessities, from hidden qualities or defects, in strange or unpredictable collocations of persons and circumstances, from the incalculable, therefore unpreventable, impact of incident or event, from the fortuitous concurrences of moods or the equally fortuitous conjuncture of two corresponding needs that are either physical or psychological—or both. Man and woman are, by their mortality and corporeality, unstable and, except for the few powerful self-determinists and the even fewer spiritual elects, the wind-blown sport and prey of tides of emotion, sporadic hungers, mere chance and mischance. Human, they are naked and exposed; human, they detect not the approach of disturbance; human, they generally follow the easy path—the way, not of salvation but of pleasure and of a so pitifully, so pitiable hoped-for happiness, of companionship and reciprocated cherishment and caress. 'They know not what they do': can they, most of them, be expected to know their way along those devious, often

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ill-defined paths, amid a confusing complexity of contradiction and bafflement and ignorance? By love, by passion, even by mere lust, the intense may be utterly possessed in heart and soul, mind and body; by them, the simple are confounded, the innocent bewildered; by those emotions and states, the intense and the simple and the innocent lose poise and therefore acumen and clear judgement. Who knows what involuntary ignorance, what desperate need, what temptations (how strongly resisted only to triumph over the weary vanquished!), what fell or mysterious or chance-convincing set of circumstances or incidents, what insidious environment, what remote hereditary predilections or predeterminations have contributed to render this man or that woman ripe for—perhaps a blind victim of—love or passion or lust? Let none be the first to cast the slanderous stone, make the condemnatory remark; for there, but for the grace of God, go you and I and all of us.

How brief the love, the love-affair, or how long, can be neither foretold nor ensured; in those, however, with whom duty prevails, duty can, in marriage or in a companionship and esteemed association, dictate continuance in 'the path of virtue'; to almost all is given the strength to be an 'H. M. Pulham, Esquire'. In any event, love is not to be slighted, depreciated, misrepresented merely because it may happen to be brief: longevity, whether of existence or of love, is not intrinsically a merit, though in love it is undeniably an advantage. Love is so precious that it is to be valued and prized for its very self. If it goes, it has at least been; while we have it, we have something of a value impossible to exaggerate. 'It is better to have loved and lost than not to have loved at all'; it is much, much better to have enjoyed a recipro-

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cated love than not to have loved and been loved, and if love then die, it nevertheless vanishes not from the mind's knowledge nor from the heart's fond memory nor yet from the enriched spirit. To say that one does not 'look a gift horse in the mouth' is a commonplace of the art of living, yet how very many, in this matter of love, forget or fail to realize the application of that elementary *Don't !* If you be granted love, make the most of it, but do not expect it to endure for ever or to lose nothing of its vernal freshness, its estival warmth, nor, when it has gone, belittle it or revile it merely because of brevity : it has been brief because mortal, mortal because human. Life everlasting belongs only to the Olympian gods and to the quintessentially spiritual. 'Tis not for ever spring, nor autumn, nor even winter.

True love, as opposed to a mere being in love with someone, is exceedingly rare, far rarer than its lackers care to admit. But a deep, true love—a great love—endures for so long as breath lasts and mind retains a thread of memory and a vestige of intelligence : it knows the lovely variations of life's long seasons, to each its glory and its joys and happiness and pleasures : it may change or vary in degree, but not (except physically) in kind, according to the precession of desires and the procession of the years : as it decreases in physical ardour, so it may—indeed, it should—increase in mental understanding, emotional sympathy, spiritual companionship, finally sinking through the glow of eventide into the enveloping comfort of night, the day having been fully and bravely lived, so that there will be no bitter regrets, no gnawing, restless remorse, no searing shame. But to reproach either oneself or one's partner because, of love, we have known only the spring, or maybe the spring and the summer, is the idle

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repentance or resentment of an ingrate, for if, with one person, we have known only the spring, may we not perhaps know the summer with another? May we not in the autumn of our precarious days know the most enduring, the most exquisite and profound, the most beautiful and versatile, the richest and strongest love of all? Might we not, even in the winter of our content, discover an Isle of Capri in a gentle, luminous, all-understanding love? How foolish, how uncomprehending, and how ungrateful we should be if we were to inveigh against love for its failure to have come in the vigour of our days. (Perhaps we should not then have appreciated the worth of the beloved, nor even have desired.) If love endure but a six-month, it yet has won six months of happiness, joy, perhaps splendour from the waste lands of life, from the drab round of usuality, from the monotonous plains of an unexciting or a meaningless existence; some have known not even that felicity.

The dumb wonder and the formless longings of what is so stupidly, so callously, and so inadequately termed 'calf love', with its bafflement and its bewilderment, its strange delights and its joys far too deep for words: this early springtime spate of unrecognized emotions and inexpressible desires, of gallant wishes and shy, barely conscious half-wishes, of pain that seems to pervade and dominate one's entire being, of long, delicious reveries, tenuous as blown mist, now magical with open and now mysterious with closed casements, filigree'd with timid fancies and iridescent with fantastic imaginings: this indeterminate physical condition, this mental disequilibrium, this spiritual chaos cannot last, for the world wantonly, viciously, Tree-of-Knowledgeably, insensitively and cruelly breaks the lovely crystal of youthful dreams

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and hopes and desires. Fragile and beautiful, it should be handled tactfully and regarded with reverence ; a brief-lived and sensitive plant, it is yet an exquisite growth. The attitude of the generality towards it forms a damning indictment, both of mankind's incomprehension and of its imperfect sympathy.

Then comes the love of the young woman and the young man : more articulate than the adolescent's emotions, it has not yet assumed that eloquent facility, that unblushing readiness which characterize the middle-aged philanderer ; it is a passion, an ardour, potentially an ecstasy at all times, actually an ecstasy on far more numerous occasions than the cynic will admit or most old people remember. Tending to poetry and extravagance, to rhythmic prose and passion, allying itself on any pretext—or none—with Nature ; touching heaven now, and now hell : at its most beautiful and pantheistic, its most adoring and illuminating, it becomes that love which has never been more perceptively, more sympathetically, more delicately described than by George Meredith in two works published in the 1850's : *Richard Feverel* and *Love in the Valley*. This love and this passion of early manhood and early womanhood have been more written about, more often painted and set to music than love and passion of any other kind or period. Such love, however, cannot survive its own psychological age, and they who expect it to do so are moronic and unreasonable.

The love of men and women in their thirties has been almost as often described. By many writers it has been termed ' the heyday of love ' or ' love's apogee ' : yet that is true only of the physical aspect. The finest period of love, for a man, lies, in the average Englishman, between the ages of forty and sixty, when the frequency

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of his potent virility is on the wane but his physical expertness and expertise are at their highest ; when mentally he is superior to his pre-forty self and the equal of himself in the succeeding decade of his years ; and spiritually he is mature (though obviously less mellow than in his post-sixty period—a fact that only slightly detracts from the selected period's general excellence) ; in the average Englishwoman from forty until she outgrows fertility, although there must be added this modification, that many women desire to be and some, in fact, make talented and loving wives or mistresses for as long as a decade, or even three lustrums, after the grand climacteric or so-called change of life.

In this, love's finest, sweetest, keenest, most sensitive and therefore most ardent period, sexuality uncontradictably counts for less than during the preceding period, for the spirituality and the mental stimulation, the delights and appreciativeness of love have come to occupy a much larger place than previously they held : love, then, is more tender and less possessive, more sympathetic and understanding : because more comprehending and comprehensive, it is less prone to jealousy and stupid quarrels and fatuous misunderstandings : ' the still sad music of humanity ' can now be heard above the drummings of lust, the crashing chords of passion, and there is time, there is, moreover, a ready willingness, to notice and to pity the potential tears in all existence and in every object and event : the mind can apperceive all the shades and all the implications of one's loving kisses and caresses and unions, what time the spirit enriches the physical sensations and the sensuous pleasures and joys with its own lambent flames and is itself enriched by one's sensory and intellectual awarenesses. Body, mind, spirit, these make,

each its own individual contribution ; but the greatest, most significant, and most important they make is that which they confer by their inextricable interdependence and indivisible co-operation, and linked therewith is the æsthetic element that derives partly from the subconscious collusion of the three elements, partly from the lovers' culture and education. The need for economy in one's physical expenditure has, in the thinking man and woman, two inevitable results : it sharpens and heightens the pleasurable sensations of intercourse, it enhances the intrinsic and the extrinsic value of the preliminary caresses and, in its wisdom, makes of them an occasional substitute for coition itself ; moreover, it puts love-making in its proper place in the hierarchy of love ; not the be-all, but merely one characteristic and one activity among several. The sadly recognized transiency of passion, of physical responsiveness, and of life itself invests both love and mere love-making with such bitter-sweetness, such wistful sadness, such deeply apprehended consciousness, such gratitude for charm and beauty as fill an adult at the sight of the fugitive bloom of innocence and auroral prettiness or, it may be, loveliness in a child. In this period the sapient man and the courageous, unaffected woman approach most nearly to a realization of the remote ideal, the desirous aspiration, the object of the tristful regrets implicit in *Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait* (If youth but knew and old age could !). This man, this woman know ; and they can, to a degree and an extent that will satisfy him and her, although they might not suffice for the lascivious and the abnormal. In such a couple there reside a mutual tolerance, a delicate understanding, a moral and mental and spiritual sympathy, a various and perfect co-operativeness and



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companionship that elevate their total association, their love or their reciprocated passion, their affection and their love-making, to a level attainable at no other period of their lives. Mutual gratitude and a shared esteem endue them with tenderness, gentleness, good humour, and inevitably originate hundreds of little, personal secrets and understandings, whether in the larger matter of their general companionship or in the smaller, yet complementary matter of their physical unions and caresses and comfortings.

Love-making is merely the physical expression of love, although not necessarily of only physical love. Love-making does more than satisfy a physical appetite resulting from the general hunger of sex, more than gratify an unspoken, often subconscious physical desideratum ; it augments and diversifies the total complex of the relationship of two persons, especially of those couples who live on the plateau of their forties and fifties. This element (from a perhaps truer angle, this component) of love, bodily love in itself and in its non-corporeal connexions, has been ardently yet delicately and most penetratingly treated by F. Tennyson Jesse in that arresting novel, *Act of God* ; her understanding of the subject is profounder than that, profound and subtle though it be, of Walter de la Mare in the introduction to his exquisite and provoking anthology, *Love*, for De la Mare's treatment is a shade too much alembicated and etiolated, stressing, as it does, the intellectual and spiritual characteristics of love to the grave detriment of the physical and therefore to the even graver detriment of love as a whole, that sometimes robust, all-vanquishing power and that sometimes far too vulnerable state.

This, obviously, is no place for a disquisition on the art

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of love-making ; there are, however, certain phases and aspects that have been either ignored or inadequately treated and crassly misapprehended. Ovid and Aretino and Casanova and many another writer upon the art of love, particularly in respect of the art of love-making, have either regarded it from the viewpoint of a woman's seduction by a man or examined (how callously, how circumscriptively, how imperceptively !) the love-making as an entity that exists upon one plane only, the physical : they appear to have forgotten, if indeed they ever perceived, that no woman not an idiot nor a moron, not intoxicated nor drug-stupefied, has ever been ' seduced ' unless she desired to be ; they have failed to set the discussion, to pose the argument, to establish the theme upon that one basis and that one understanding which admit of a sane and sensitive, a comprehending and comprehensive treatment : the companionate and mutual and reciprocatory nature, the sympathy and shared delight, the unlimited and selfless exchange, the expansive esteem and the circumambient spirituality, the intelligent appreciativeness and the emotional gratitude that characterize—moreover, that constitute the more lasting, the non-animal qualities of—a truly passionate, a fundamentally generous love-making. Such writers' ignorance and ignoring of women invalidate their *artes amoris* or their *bréviaires divins de l'amour*, in which the art is merely technical and incitatory and there is nothing divine ; here is the cunning of the more intelligent apes, not the art of intelligent, mutually aiding and mutually appreciative man and woman. These writers and their like regard women merely as instruments in the satisfaction of their recurrent urges, their fancy-fomented lusts, and their reminiscent lecheries, not as the tender partners in their physical

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solacings and their corporal enfranchisements, not as latently eager participants and joyous coadjutors in skilful and masterly combination, not as individuals with equal rights and similar or, at the least, corresponding needs and desires, not, in short, as amorously sympathetic and love-companionable complementaries. They blindly fail to see that an esteemed and unfeignedly ardent volunteer is worth ten pressed women and that they are purblindly depriving themselves of something far more valuable, far more delightful, far more lovely than a selfish satisfaction of their manly possessiveness, or a cruel, self-regarding satiation of their scabrous and bestial lust or their self-excitatory lasciviousness. They lose all the intellectual potentialities, and all the spiritual enrichments, of a triple-facultied as contradistinct to a sheerly physical congress, of a total as opposed to a solely genital coition, of a sensuously conjunctive as opposed to a sensually disjunctive copulation. In union they tempestuously exist, much as a gadfly drowns in an eddy ; they do not fully live, for their attitude, instead of being creative, is destructive. No lover is worth his passion-saltiness who does not accord to his mistress's pleasure and satisfaction, happiness and delectation, an importance at least the equal of his own and who does not welcome and prize and evince gratitude for initiativeness and a frank, genial self-expressiveness on her part even more than he congratulates himself on, or approves in himself, a comparable virtuosity and an equal ardour. Apt learners and ready compliers, women also possess audacity and ingenuity and an inventive imagination ; that man who does not encourage them to exercise their natural aptitudes and their individual excellencies is not only a repressive fool but a stupid self-frustrator, one who stands, avenging angel, at the portal of his own

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felicity and his mistress's suffusive delight, liquescence, gratification, and memory-garnered ecstasy, the more valued by her in that she has devised and contributed no less to the consummation than to the exquisite, love-prolonged, love-varied preliminaries. Far too many males have a defective sense of the value of those preliminaries; almost none has the sense to see that these usually prelusive caresses may equally be epilogal or even a self-contained gamut of amorous endearment; the majority of women instinctively grasp that essential fact, for, in this matter as in most other aspects of love and passion, they know that although it is not necessarily better to journey than to arrive, journeying may be no less delightful than arrival itself; that caress may sometimes surpass union; that union can easily become an insensate helter-skelter or a hurrying, hustled need, pitifully brief and self-indulgent; that, in the self-controlled and the partner-considerate, the ultimate scabbarding can be made a leisurely or at least an unhurried mutual emparadising and a reciprocal ascent to the starry ardour of a joint appeasement.

Such considerateness and such expert control demand thought and esteem. Instinct alone does not suffice. Nor does intelligence alone. But the alliance of an intelligence that subserves instinct and an esteem that debestializes the animal element, accomplishes more than any other factor could possibly accomplish. To the old-fashioned and the unco' guid, the presence of thought and the employment of deliberation import an element of evil and comport a potentiality of vice in that they change and perhaps alter the instinct of propagation, such persons failing to comprehend that the factors of thought and consideration, esteem and device, constitute precisely those characteristics which differentiate the cultured

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from the bestial and demarcate the human from the animal.

Does, therefore, intelligence refine and dignify passion? Certainly, if the passion be the mutual aspiration of love or the shared, momentary ardour of strong affection: love enlists all available allies, deep affection is so kindly and so kind that it unconsciously feels an all-embracing tolerance. This is not to say that love and, to a less degree, affection do not include an intellectual, sometimes also a spiritual passion, nor that these non-corporeal passions do not inevitably and considerably increase and liberalize the physical passion itself. Wherever and whenever a physical conjunction originates, not in mere conjugal or cohabitational custom, but in warmth and longing, there and then, whether in lovers (legalized or natural) or in fugitive collusionists that entertain affection and feel attraction the one for the other, does passion retain something of delicacy and beauty.

Passion between those who feel neither love nor strong friendship nor warm affection for each other, passion between those who, in short, are flaccidly or fierily yielding to prurience or to a lubricous periodicity of appetite or an abstinence-generated pressure of the tides of their blood upon the dykes of continence, such passion is a misnomer for lust, that human urge which corresponds to the collision of animals in heat or to the vitiated lecheries of period-independent apes and monkeys and which may be prompted by pornography, by either a sophisticated or an elemental exhibition of heterosexual nudity, by an urgent contiguity, by salacity of speech or suggestiveness of gesture, by such a conflagration of the blood, such an insurgence of the flesh, as may arise from intoxicating drink or inflammatory food or from the fertilizing in-

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fluence of warmth and luxurious ease or again from a couple's protracted seclusion from intrusive and interfering third parties. Yet lust may be direct, frank, honest, and even beneficial : uncloaked with hypocrisy, unclad with lies, refusing to shelter in the fallacious forests of mysticism or on the peaks of idealism, and disdaining to simulate love, or pretend to passion, to appear other than what it is, it has at least that genuineness, that sincerity, that naturalness which redeem life from sham and cant, and liberate emotion from the shackles of hot-house artificiality and sanctimonious vice. The casual amours of the chance-met, the ephemeral unions of those who are attracted by nothing gentler than the rut of tigers, the fortuitous contemporaneities of physical need in two persons who would, at all other times, not give each other a bodily thought, these indulgences of the dog-and-bitch beneath the human skin, carnal and beast-simple though they may be and usually are, yet seem to be preferable to the perfumed concupiscences of the alcove and the provocative excitations, the calculated allurements of jaded sophisticates and novelty-seeking sensationalists, the vicious devices of men almost impotent and of women almost incapable of physical ecstacy, for whereas the former have the merit of simplicity and the naturalness of immediacy, the generosity of ardour and the courage of truth, the latter are—or at least they very often are—artificial and unnatural, illiberal and pusillanimous.

Intermediate between love and lust, but much nearer to the former than to the latter and, occasionally, almost as enduring as love itself, nearly always more enduring than an affair in which physical attraction predominates, stands that rare yet probably crescive relationship which may best be defined as passionate friendship. Probably crescive,

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for in a world in which women outnumber men, in a world that women rightly intend to mould nearer to their hearts' desire, women lacking a husband will no longer rest content with concubinage or with the chancy facilities of holiday and travel.

Passionate friendship affords a solution, not only to many of the world's saddest emotional tangles, sentimental frustrations, physical deprivations and deviations, psychological disturbances and aberrations, spiritual amaritudes and desiderates, but also to those terrible, those heart-breakingly lonesome, those despairful longings which are compact of body's natural and rightful need, mind's solitude, heart's passion for companionship, spirit's lack of expansiveness : dulcified and emollient of grief and pain, as of sadness and wistfulness ; gently satisfying the desires of the heart and the soul ; sweetly companioning the lonely mind and the solitary spirit ; appeasing and reposing the clamorous, urgent, esurient bodies of virile man and eager woman and slaking that sexual thirst which, unquenched, sours and shrivels the woman and perverts the body or distorts the mind of the man ; comforting the caressed girl, the cherished woman, and consoling and solacing the man ; bestower of that companionship without which life can seem, may actually be, vain and empty, trivial and arid, irritating and exasperating and exacerbating, full of despondency and habitual depression, that companionship with which one may march, valiant-breasted, along the hardest way and the longest road. A passionate friendship may—often it does—yield a rich harvest in a physical health almost immeasurably improved, a fulfilled humanity, a greater tolerance, a much more equable judgement, a startling enlargement of the circle of one's interests, a sweeter

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temper and a calmer temperament, a sunflower-like opening of both mind and spirit to cultural appreciation and æsthetic pleasure, an invigoration of that mind and a beatification of that spirit.

Admittedly, there is the Church's inelastic condemnation of extra-marital intimacy. There is, moreover, a vast social and economic problem involved (although, in the long view, not necessarily inherent) in a husband's passionate friendship with another woman, a wife's intimacy with another man, and for the latter the risk of foisting an extraneous child upon a husband that already has commitments enough. But where, no monetary loss harming the 'wronged' party, there no longer exists love, but only habit of friendship or friendly habit, between husband and wife; or where, the parties not being already married, a couple cannot afford to marry or, lacking love, fear to marry: in these three cases, which embrace millions of men and women, it is difficult to find against a passionate friendship such potent reasons, such unavoidable and mighty facts, as can be adduced in its favour. Can the Church's inhuman prohibition and tyrannical ukase and dictatorial veto, can the legal, man-made, hush-hush and society-encouraged tie of marriage, adjutory of vested interests (but also, who would deny?, protective of the child and beneficial to the State), can this tie and that prohibition be held sufficient both to override that humanity for which, within which, dependent upon which Church and marriage even exist, and to stultify that charity upon which every religion is based and without which all theologies and ethical systems are unfeeling, inhuman, irrelevant, inoperative? To the petty-minded and the little-brained, to the weak and the oppressed, to the timorous and the over-modest, to the



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convention-ridden and the Church-intimidated and the Law-shadowed, the question implies a problem, difficult and vexatious : to the strong-hearted and the brave-souled, to the deep-thinking and far-seeing, to the essentially generous, there is, the issue being clear, no such problem ; no problem at all, although there may, there should, be regrets that someone might be pained. Jealousy has to be resisted or combated : charity must dominate legality or a narrowly moral prohibition. Better two persons happy, one unhappy, than three persons unhappy : better that a light should burn, a lamp show luminous in the plain, than that three persons should grow sour, embittered.

I can tell a story, many of its details having been confided to me, a story that now can hurt no one, grieve no one, for the man died in 1942, his childless wife reads nothing more serious than a newspaper, and the mistress will understand. Wilfred X. perished on a far and foreign field : an enemy shell brought a poignantly longed-for oblivion to that sad and weary heart, to that despairing and desolate soul, to that tortured brain, to that enduring, frustrated love, abruptly by the incidence of a suave expatriate, simple-seeming in the convincing sincerities of a cleverly assumed single-mindedness and winsome-wistful in his factitious stranger-loneliness. Wilfred had met her in 1938, throughout 1939 been her lover and tenderly cherished by her in return, and early in 1940 lost her to that polished, superficially important consul, upon which tragic and sudden termination of his passion he had, in March, enlisted in the Army. Towards the end of that fateful year, the consul (also married) had returned to his own country, but Francine, mourning his departure and his absence, refused to renew anything but amicable

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relations with her former, her English lover, despite his continuous kindness and continual kindnesses to her, despite the very considerable sacrifices he made to ease her lot ; she remained deaf to his not ineloquent pleas, to his patently intense suffering. Conventionally, she was right, for Wilfred she had not truly loved, the consul she still did love. Nevertheless, would not an intelligent, clear-thinking, generous woman, of a less conventional rectitude, have occasionally sallied from the oblique impregnability of her devious virtue to comfort him with that intimacy for which his body craved and his heart yearned ? This would have afforded a nobler example of passionate friendship than that which she had bestowed upon him before the expatriate came and conquered.

And here is another story, likewise enacted within the orbit of my acquaintance. A painter, married to an in-artistic and querulous woman, fell in love with a woman artist, and she with him. They were in love, physically ; whether they loved each other, in the fullest acceptance of that potent verb, is extremely doubtful. Perhaps their relationship was rather that of passionate friendship, for it was as friends that they shone, each delighting in the other's artistry and flashing wit and ready sympathy and prompt assistance. The painter's wife heard some gossip and caused her husband to be watched by a private detective, whose report convinced her that the pair were ' guilty ' ; whereupon she wrote to the friend and insisted that the association should cease. The woman, disgusted, removed to another town and refused to see or write to her lover-friend. Both of the ' guilty parties ' suffered ; he, with deeper-seated feelings, the more ; she, however, in her fastidiousness outraged and in her wounded pride. Yet that passionate friendship might well have endured,

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without harm (except for the wife's jealousy) and with a positive benefit to both of the artists, who in their relationship found comfort and inspiration, a tender and many-faceted companionship, a refuge from intellectual and spiritual loneliness. Certainly its termination lastingly estranged the painter from his wife.

In short, the world has some way to go before passionate friendships will be accepted, but it is at least arguable that it will be a happier place when they have been accepted. Probably also a better place, for it will necessarily be more tolerant and enlightened ; there will be much less of starved affection and many fewer frustrated, stunted lives and soured natures and perversions and crimes. And if anyone cry ' Hedonism ! ' or ' Lax morality ! ' or ' Total lack of moral principle ! ', he condemns himself, convicts himself of a deplorable lack of charity ; if someone say, ' But this is to incite the married to the breaking-up of homes, the unmarried to incontinence ', then *he* has wilfully misunderstood.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Edge of Morning*

FROM my seventeenth year, when, after long thoughts and longer meditations, accompanied by agony of spirit and desolation of heart, I became a theistic agnostic, I have been steadily progressing towards a viable mode of life and a pragmatistic idealism in philosophy. A life-mode that will be adequate to the stresses and distresses of the daily round and to the unpredictable incidents and disasters that may happen to any man, and a philosophy that, basically and predominantly idealistic, has adopted many of the best features of Pragmatism and has been modified both by a vicissitudinous career and emotional experience and by the Realism of Bertrand Russell. But the metaphysics of a layman might, to professed metaphysicians, seem callow and immature ; to other laymen, unconvincing and even irrelevant.

That my philosophical system is only tentative, groping, exploratory, provisional, is beside the point, for all philosophical systems are provisional and tentative. No philosophical system consists of demonstrables only ; every system consists, in the main, of probables and plausibles. If each tenet is itself probable and the tenets forming the aggregate, the total system, are logically interdependent or, at the worst, non-contradictory and if, also, the whole philosophical complex is at once logical and probable, then its holder can act consistently and convincingly. But

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the premisses, the very foundations, of his philosophy rest, all or some, wholly or partly, upon undemonstrable assumptions and character-biased presumptions. The most that can be demanded of a philosophical system is that it be coherent in both the etymological and the current sense ; that it hold firmly together and be lucidly expressed, as, for instance, are the philosophies of Berkeley, William James, A. N. Whitehead, Bertrand Russell. That being so, I—a most unprofessional philosopher—deem reticence preferable to volubility, discretion to that ignorance which rushes in where even the profoundest and most practised philosophers tread warily, trustingly rather than assuredly, and I shall therefore treat only briefly and tangentially of such deep matters.

A man's ' philosophy of life ', however, is a different matter, for this concerns, not the mystery of the universe nor his own future, but only his way of living and his thoughts upon that way. The very term *way* \* refers both to the journeying along *ἡ ὁδός* (the road itself) and to the manner of the journeying (a person's road manners). He may choose the mystic way of the Orient, the religious way of, for instance, Christianity, the philosophical way of the Stoic or, in its true, its undebased sense, the Epicurean, the way of ' the merely moral man ', or, again, the way of such a ' merely moral ' person as is actuated and motivated by a potent, operative integrity. To each man, his way : that which helps and develops, encourages and enriches one person, may be unsuitable to another ; one may act best as an agnostic, another as a Catholic, yet another as a Protestant : whereas to this person, mysticism brings a deep, indestructible, undamageable happiness and tranquillity, to that it may appear as a

\* See ' way ' in my *A New Testament Word-Book*.

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creed that is fraught with quietism, inertia, even accidia ; to one, Catholicism is too sensuous, a soporific drug, to another Protestantism seems bleak and discouraging and deficient ; one selects Stoicism, another its opposite, Hedonism ; to this man, God is an almost perceptible being, the Person transcending all persons yet containing, to a divine degree, all human qualities, no human defects ; to a second, a force, the supreme force ; to a third, a presence ; to a fourth, an immanence. The agnostic neither denies nor affirms the existence of that God, to whom, fatuously and presumptuously, the atheist categorically denies existence and power—in brief, reality. An agnostic believes that he cannot *know* the existence of God, but a theistic agnostic believes that His existence is more probable, more cosmos-logical, than His non-existence and, although he would like to think that He does exist and that He is benevolent or, at the least, concerned with the life and the fate of mankind, yet he feels that this may be man's self-conceit, man's fear that, after all, he perhaps stands alone, and, so feeling, the theistic agnostic is determined to forge a creed for himself, a creed that, allowing for the possibility of the consciousness and the intervention of God, yet seeks to make its holder self-reliant, and, in so far as this is practicable, self-sufficient philosophically, intellectually, morally, spiritually.

Humbly and tentatively, I am such a theistic agnostic. I believe that God, if He exist, would approve my notion that only by refusing to cling to the skirts of His divine robe, to the comfort of His immanence, and by trusting in himself alone, striving to cope with chance and mischance, with ineluctable fate and with influenceable destiny, and by marching onward, ever onward, even

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when fate seems to be crushingly adverse and destiny inimical, only thus can a person merit the badge of moral courage and spiritual fortitude, and only thus can he, indeed, grow to his full stature ; that to depend upon prayer or upon any other form of support, to expect, or even to hope for, divine help, is deliberately to stunt one's growth and to be guilty of moral laziness and spiritual *laissez faire* : and that this intellectual opinion and the concomitant psychological attitude need not (in my own person they assuredly do not) and should not spring from, nor be in any degree vitiated by, pride or arrogance (much less by irreverence), and that, on the contrary, they originate in, are in fact generated by, humility, for such a person finds it difficult to believe himself of sufficient importance in the universe or of sufficient significance to God that He should desire to assist him—to ' save ' him—to reward him. Nor, by the same reasoning, to punish him.

A man's acts bear within them their own results, which may be favourable to him or unfavourable : and what is, or seems to be, favourable or unfavourable in the present, may ultimately turn out to be unfavourable or favourable (or, to employ a different terminology, malefic or beneficial or, to fall back upon an older, more basic dichotomy, evil or good) ; in the social sphere, a compromise occasionally has to be made, for an act individually good may be socially detrimental, and vice versa, although it must be remarked and remembered that the results of social acts are, in general, even more unpredictable than those of individual acts.

And as one person's acts, whether individual, self-regarding, inward-looking, or social, commonweal-regarding, outward-looking, are pregnant with unforetellable

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births, so either a community's or a nation's acts often go much farther along the predicted path than had been foreseen or have results that had not been foreseen at all : any act, single or collective, constitutes a marriage between the performer and life and between the often apprehended, seldom fully comprehended present and a future, whether near or remote, discernible only by seers and the greatest philosophers. Whereas some human marriages are barren, every act constitutes a marriage that is fruitful. The engendering of a child is a chancy, a venturesome, even a risky enterprise (how casually, how blindly and unthinkingly it is usually undertaken, the married will bear rueful witness), for ancestral characteristics, dormant for one, two or more generations, may reappear and the merging of two separately in-the-main good characters and happy temperaments may produce a child less good and a temperament much less happy, although, fortunately, a flower-child may, on the other hand, spring from an apparently unfortunate marriage, and life may prove hard, discouraging, harmful or, less frequently, rather more benign, encouraging, beneficial than had, in the expectation, appeared probable : yet life, it seems, must go on and, in life, the most important thing, it is virtually certain, is living. But that engendering of fate—of a train of events—which is every act whatsoever, how much more chancy, haphazard, rash it is ! (Obviously, coition is also an act, and it may have numerous results apart from the intervalled birth of a child, that birth constituting merely the natural, physical consequence ; certain mental or spiritual consequences may be even more momentous and even farther-reaching.) Set a match to a train of powder leading to a powder-magazine, to a fuse ending in a concentrated mass of



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high explosive, and you produce an explosion, with the explosion's calculable, often exactly calculated, results : commit an act (to which a considered decision or a sudden impulse has been the fuse) and you institute a set of resultant acts and influences, or, maybe, tendencies that themselves proliferate and ramify in multitudinous manners and in innumerable directions. To how slight a first cause, perchance also to how slight an immediate cause (the *causa causans* in contradistinction to the *causa originans* or the *fons et origo*), may we trace a world-changing war, whereby lives are ended or inalterably developed or diverted !

Such thoughts may, in the spineless and the timorous, cause inaction ; but in the courageous and the energetic, they generate a determination to act according to their best nature and to the best of their ability, for, after all, a good intention is superior to an evil one, a righteous act to a wicked, an unselfish to a selfish, kindness to cruelty, honesty to dishonesty—a fact that pessimists and fatalists and predestinarians are apt to overlook. One's best-intentioned acts, whether of deed or of word, may, in one's grieved despite, go amiss by proving inadequate or even wholly mistaken : yet one has done one's utmost : and, in an outmoded quotation, ' not failure but low aim is crime '.

To become cynical or embittered by one's failures is stupid, cowardly, superficial. One's acts may meet with no other reception than contempt, one's offerings but refusal, one's words only the deaf ear ; he who acts or speaks without having envisaged and anticipatorily braced himself to bear such treatment is either an optimistic fool or a conceited moron, and he who allows such knowledge to undermine his will, to damp his enthusiasm, to lessen

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his charity, to retard his action, implicatively distrusts the efficacy and doubts the worth of goodness and kindness, courage and integrity. He who, in the ultimate resort, depends upon another is depending upon someone he knows less well than himself and, if wise, he will have planned, beforehand, a second line of action to be adopted if that other person fail to do or be prevented from doing his share ; whenever possible, one should act by oneself, although, where secrecy is not necessary, one may profitably ask the advice of a trustworthy friend. To act thus alone is to lay oneself open to the charge of secretiveness or slyness ; but harm far less frequently results from saying nothing than from saying much ; it is noticeable, too, that normally it is the weak and the hesitant who want others to confide in them, the reason being that it is they who feel flattered by confidences—especially from those whom they know or surmise to be stronger than themselves. The strong, like the considerate, shrink from burdening others with their troubles and doubts, whereas the weak, like the inconsiderate, are for ever plaguing others with requests for advice and assistance, even although those others may have far graver difficulties and problems with which to contend. ' Playing a lone hand ' possesses its charm, its thrills, its fascination : and it is always so satisfactory to have only oneself to blame if things go wrong ! This, however, does not preclude the seeking of advice before one plays it, even if one seek it only to test one's theories, to check one's plans, and, in details, to modify one's aim and the manner in which one has proposed to achieve it ; those details may perhaps make all the difference between failure and success. Occasionally, however, a piece of sage advice will basically change a plan or even cause it to be discarded, for he who plays the lone hand is not

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necessarily obstinate, nor yet stupid, although usually he is a strongly determined person.

I myself am an idealist : realistic in my idealism idealistic and melioristic and self-determinist in my realism : holding to an idealism that, all facts envisaged persists as an activating aspiration or, as it may be, set of aspirations. I endeavour to see the world as it is ( ' A mind that has completely debunked itself ', *The Sunday Times* kindly remarked in 1932, apropos of *Literary Sessions*), yet to reject all such of its limitations as are not material or physical ; to be in the world but not wholly of it. ' The world is too much with us ' signifies rather more than ' We are so much occupied in our worldly business—or, We are so sorely harassed by the struggle to live—that we cannot tend our souls ', for it implies that persistence in worldly wisdom at the expense of the spirit's health and development will result in spiritual atrophy and moral apathy.

But idealism, to have any practical value, must be not merely an activating aspiration but also a driving force, an energetic constant. Idealistic impulses may and often do lead to single acts of generosity and self-sacrifice, but the true idealist rests not content with isolated impulses he desires, and strives to cultivate, an operative attitude of mind and spirit, to clear and then so to cultivate a character-field that it can and infallibly will produce a promising crop and a rich harvest. All of it done quietly, self-effacingly, without pride, without self-righteousness and without that feeling of superiority which is unforgivably priggish and which, worse still, dims our view of the world and taints our sympathy with our fellow-men. By deed rather than by word, and always, if speech be at all employed, with deeds implementing promise and advice and encouragement. It is unnecessary—and certainly it

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is inadvisable—to preach, but a forthright and logical, warmly expressed and warm-hearted urging or condemnation, encouragement or consolation or comforting, is sometimes the only action possible at the time, or at least the most helpful until material assistance can be rendered ; with sensitive persons, speech often gives less offence and proves to be more acceptable than any deed.

Idealism, in addition to being altruistic in action and charitable in heart and mind (without the least trace of condescension or of offensive, belittling pity) and, in addition to being a continuing and continuous intention and a constant spiritual aspiration, directed, as to both mind and spirit, towards all other persons—Idealism should, for oneself, be a pervasively philosophical state of mind and spirit, a source of courage and comfort, and the basis of one's integrity.

Not that this is the only form of integrity, for integrity may characterize the holder of any system of philosophy, any code of ethics, any sect of religion—or, indeed, the holder of none of these formulated beliefs. As I see it, there are two primary virtues : the one, private or individual, the other public or social. Integrity and kindness.

*Kindness* must here be taken to comprise kindness, active and practical, and kindliness, passive and theoretical, as well as benevolence and mercy and charity, whether of spirit or mind or act. It lies behind tolerance, a disposition of mind, and behind toleration, that temper or manner which informs or modifies action ; behind altruism, that principle of action which may also be a spring of action ; behind considerateness, with its tender regard for the feelings and the convenience (or the comfort) of others ; behind unselfishness. No person truly and thoroughly, extensively and profoundly kind, can act

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cruelly or unjustly ; nor can he act dishonestly or dishonourably, for to thief, to cheat, to evade social and moral obligations, these faults of commission and omission directly or indirectly harm, or unjustifiably implicate, an innocent person. Kindness precludes revenge and spiteful retaliation, although here, as in the other moral issues mentioned or implied, integrity also may be equally or even predominantly involved. Kindness, moreover, refrains from greed and avarice, envy and slander and malice. Kindness is an easier, though not less worthy virtue than integrity ; for instance, many a weak person may be kind, but he finds it difficult—and in situations of subtle temptation he may find it impossible—to maintain his integrity, supposing he has been able even to formulate a credo of integrity, his very character tending to exclude that spiritual vision and that temper of mind and heart which form the soil in which integrity can even begin to germinate and thrive.

*Integrity*, etymologically 'entirety', is too often defined as 'honesty'. Integrity includes honesty, it also includes all honourableness, and forms the main element and the quintessence of honour in its every aspect ; it includes the sense and unfailing practice of justice and equity. It excludes—indeed, it precludes—treachery and pettiness and even the slightest defection from duty (whether as idea or as execution). It discourages cowardice, which is abhorrent to it, although, human nerves being human, not made of iron, it cannot prevent it ; *virī et feminae integri*, men and women of integrity, condemn cowardice in themselves, yet they feel a deep pity for those others who are cowards. It also discourages and, in the strong, prevents pusillanimity. To integrity, courage and fortitude are valuable adjuncts, nay they are, of the finest

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integrity, essential constituents ; determination, resoluteness, and a prompt decisiveness issuing practically (and untautologically) in clear, firm decisions—these three qualities form essentials and, incidentally, ornaments of active integrity. Integrity considerably benefits from and, in some degree, consists of an approximation to completeness, ‘ all-roundness ’ of character ; of actual, not merely potential character. Potentiality untested, undeveloped, resembles a great natural gift that a person is too lazy—or, it may be, too timorous—to use at all, much less to develop to its uttermost limit ; and the fact that the varieties of potential integrity are so numerous as to render it unlikely that one could develop all those varieties should not deter one from trying to develop all the potentialities one possesses, nor even from sowing and cultivating such phases of integrity as are not an hereditary possession. Nevertheless, there exists an appallingly real hazard : in seeking to develop a multiplicity of potentialities, one may fail to develop precisely those in which one is strongest. It therefore behoves the desirously self-integrating person to examine, rather to scrutinize in the most rigorous manner, his own character in order to determine, with precision, those potentialities in and by which, intellectually and morally and spiritually (or : intellectually or morally or spiritually), he will, presumably rather than certainly, go farthest along desirable paths and work the greatest benefit both to others and to himself. The talented man, the great non-evil man, may the most benefit others by developing himself along individualistic lines, whereas the good but untalented man will probably act the most effectually and efficaciously by consistently putting others before himself.

It may plausibly, as it can logically, be advanced that

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the genuinely talented person and, above all, the genius confers on mankind the greatest benefits by 'living to himself alone' and by expressing himself with the uttermost degree of individuality : *homo creatrix*, the creative artist in music, literature, painting and sculpture, is probably betraying his compulsive urge and flouting the (at least, the seemingly) divine afflatus and, in plain fact, denying his gods or his God if he dissipate his energies, dim the brilliance of the light in and—here the *crux*—by which he works, and stray from that prophetic path through the world's *selva oscura* by so heeding the petty, too insistent voice of 'the social duties and unwritten laws' of humdrum routine that he thereby fails in his powerful purpose, that purpose of which he will be only partly conscious unless he is a natural introspective. (But whether he is fully, partially, or not a whit conscious of that power of which he is merely a vehicle or, at best, a promoter and developer, is beside the immediate point.) There, most signally, does the question of integrity enter into a matter to which, at first thought, integrity may appear to be entirely extraneous. But a man needs integrity, of the strongest kind and in a remarkable degree, in order that he may be enabled to maintain his indomitable—to some, it would seem his ruthless—purpose ; failing, it may well be, in the social virtue of kindness, he thus fails because society would impertinently impinge upon his creative work and he will not brook that external, irrelevant, and, to him, unwarrantable interference.

Among the conventionals and the totalitarians, such a creative artist may appear either as an intensely selfish person and a human juggernaut or as a criminally anti-social State-inimical person : headstrong, wilful, unfeeling, callous. This is a hasty opinion, worthy of half-witted

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philistines, for a painter or a sculptor, a writer, a musician, or a craftsman predominantly and notably artistic, so far from being insentient, suffers from what, to the non-creative, appears an excessive sensibility. To attain his end, he has, unless he be a monomaniac, to overcome many an agony of conflict and self-reproach and to breast many a wave of pity and remorse : that is but part of the price he willingly pays. He may be a sociable creature, yet, to avoid frittering away his time, he must, usually, flee that crowd in which he would so gladly mingle, and refuse to involve himself in that skein of affection wherein he would gladly be entangled. That a writer, unless he would remain an ivory-towered recluse, ignorant of much that men and women are experiencing, must often ' get out and about ', does not invalidate the argument ; thus abroad, he is rather an observant eye and an alert mind and an absorbent perceptivity than ' a social animal '.

If a painter or sculptor, a musician, a poet, has, or seems to have, an imperfect appreciation of the value of money, philistines shake their heads, with a knowing smile upon their complacent faces, and say, ' Oh, well, he's only an artist.' Men of integrity, whether artists or not, show a most reprehensible disregard of, some of them a smiling contempt for, all money beyond such a sum as will ensure a modest competence. So, too, with power and influence, fame and popularity.

These statements, which may seem to have a dogmatic and outrageous ring, admittedly need modification of tone and clarification of scope. The man of integrity, who, by the way, is also a man of co-ordinative and integrated faculties, may incidentally make money, he may even amass a considerable amount ; but it will always be incidentally, almost accidentally. He who sets out to



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'make his pile' will probably become obsessed with the lust of money: and 'the love of money'—not, as the quotation is so often truncated, 'money'—'is the root of all evil'. Certainly such a man will become blinded to the aim of the true artist; that is, to create, with all his senses alert, his mind intensively active, his spirit exalted, the best that he can conceive and execute. He who, at any time whatsoever, spoils a good piece of work through a desire to be 'popular' and therefore, he fondly supposes, likely to gain a larger sum, is false to his genius or his talent and, as often as not, disappointed of his financial expectation. Unless—it happens but rarely—he is so fortunate as immediately to win a profitable public or connexion or as to be possessed of independent means, the artist must, if he has commitments and obligations, so far bow to necessity as to do a certain amount of work that, below his aspirations and criteria, will enable him to fulfil his social obligations, to survive for better work, and to rid him of carking worries; but so long as he is acutely conscious of his defections, and carries high the banner of his faith, and devotes the maximum possible time to the furtherance of his hopes and dreams, finally he will succeed in achieving, not that perfection to which he has striven to attain ('tis better that he should not even think he has achieved it), but the best that in him lies.

As for power and influence, they, like an excess of money, are snares and baubles, except in so far as they assist men of integrity to realize themselves, to fulfil themselves, and to encourage and assist other such men. For themselves, unless, as very seldom happens, they need it for the advancement of their integrity itself, power, whether overtly exercised or in the less ostentatious form of influence, is an obvious temptation laid before their

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ironic or mildly disdainful eyes by that *persona* of Satan who is ruler or ruler's notable assistant, financier or company director, president of this or chairman of that.

Linked with power and influence are fame and popularity. The man of integrity, if he be also a man of genius or talent, brilliance or pre-eminent flair, may in his own despite become famous or popular, or both : for him, however, fame is no spur, popularity no lure. Not having sought them, he usually finds them something of a hindrance and much of a nuisance, for they are apt to prove time-wasters, energy-sappers, privacy-violators. Armoured in his integrity, he sees fame for the exhibitionist he is, and popularity as a courtesan ; the charms of both are meretricious. Ambition has been described as the last infirmity of a noble mind. But unless one's ambition be to wax in integrity and in the excellence—the honourable excellence—of performance in one's vocation, ambition can all too easily become a soul-destroyer.

The artist's integrity is so closely bound up with the excellence of his performance that they cannot, except for the purposes of theoretical analysis, be separated : the artist's (painter's, musician's, writer's) purpose is, or should be, so to achieve his ambitions that his integrity suffer not ; the artistic facet of his integrity consists in this, that, on the negative side, he refuse to prostitute his art, and that, on the positive, he pursue his ideals with all his physical strength, with his mind at full stretch and his senses constantly (in practice : habitually) alert, and with all his heart and soul. (If he be a religious man, he most honours his God by using his gift, his faculties, to the full.) He should seek to develop his fortunate equipment ; fortunate, because it is accorded to but few ; and to preserve,

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fortify, enrich his idealism. He should feel very proud that Chance (with a trenchant query as to the correctness, or at least the suitability, of the term) should have endowed him with the faculties that make an artist; and highly value his peculiar talent or, it may be, genius. Equally he should feel no conceit and in nowise show himself, in nowise be, arrogant because of that gift. If the artist feel that he is set apart, he rightly so feels: but he would be foolish and unkind to persist in obtruding his opinion, his conviction, upon others. That the State fails to perceive his apartness or, at any rate, to recognize it is only to be expected: that expectation, however, renders the State's failure no less fatuous and no less deplorable. 'Why?' the philistines and the unthinking will quite naturally ask. Why? It is the world's artists who, even more than its preachers and its publicists, maintain and foster the life of the spirit, that life which is opposed to carnage and destruction, to injustice and cruelty and all uncharitableness, to the worship of Mammon and the rut for power, to triviality and ephemerality, to narrowness of mind and meanness of soul, to ugliness in any and every form, to lying and deceit and treachery, to materialism and hedonism.

Contrary to the belief of sentimentalists, spirituality is not weakened by the banishment of vague sentiment; the clear, introspective, self-scrutinizing thinker that debunks himself is, if idealistic, the better for the riddance of sham, hypocrisy, and self-pity: and his integrity is thereby strengthened. To debunk oneself is not to devitalize; desensitize, impoverish one's creative spirit, one's urgent mind, one's charitable heart. The modern canting belief, held by so many so-called intellectuals and 'advanced minds', that sentiment is to be eschewed indicates a pusillanimous spirit, a meagre intellect, and an arid

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heart : the attitude implied is petty : the practice recommended is cowardly.

If there has emerged a sentimental tenet I can formulate clearly, it is that it is prudent and wise to avoid the indurated heart ('Harden not your hearts . . .') and to shun that brand of modernity which fears to be warmly natural (towards those who merit such intimacy), to have and unashamedly to admit one's possession of ideals, and, except where it would be morally inept to do so, to efface oneself—to forgo one's own advantage—for the sake of others.

To espouse that modern inanity, to inflict upon oneself such spiritual, mental, sentimental deprivations, is implicatively and essentially, perhaps inevitably, to adopt and finally to be capable only of a much narrower range of interests and sympathies and, worse, to undermine those interests and sympathies to a degree that stultifies creativeness and ruinously weakens all constructive charitableness : it is 'the universal heart'—rather, man's fallible approximation thereto—which, understanding all (or rather, something less than all), can be of stable assistance to others and integrally happy in itself.

There is far, far too much derision of youth's ingenuous deeds and generous impulses, as also of childhood's spontaneous fancies and affections ; the pity is that, in nearly all of us, youthful generousities and ideals so soon become shop-worn and shop-soiled, and we so soon grow to distrust spontaneous affection. Likewise the ready fancies and upwelling imaginations of childhood and adolescence, instead of being preserved and encouraged, are derided and curbed and discouraged. In the artist, something of the child remains, to his immense benefit : in him, the sense of wonder, the pure and pellucid appreciation

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of beauty, the sempiternal, indefeasible spirit survive and increase instead of being dulled, blunted, constrictingly embittered. Experience need not 'rub the bloom from the rose'; experience contributes to the true artist's ability to see it in its every phase, its every æsthetic facet, its entire beauty, in its pathetic transience as well as at its exquisite noon.

Almost every experience, of almost every kind and in almost every degree, is formative. Especially does this apply to the artist; provided always that he remain watchfully observant and relentlessly self-critical, intellectually detached and, if the experience be dubious, spiritually aloof. A man cannot be said to retain his integrity, nor to develop it, if he go not out into the world ('I love not a cloister'd virtue') and move not among all classes, companies, and groups of men; nor can he claim to know the world that he sets out to describe in paint or music or words. Moreover, he who does not 'mix' freely and live fully misses knowing much of the best, the most significant, and the most stirring there is in mankind. Only by living with and coming to know all sorts, all conditions of men, does one learn a humbling (but in no way humiliating) and very important fact. Among the simplest and the humblest folk, there are men and women that shame the preachers and the philosophers, the politicians and the pundits: and this, although they themselves are unaware of it, they do by the dignity and moral beauty, the selflessness, the quiet independence, and the lovingkindness of their deeds and their modes of life.

This is not mere airy talk nor doctrinaire theory. These reflections, springing from things done and seen, felt and thought, represent a distillation: perhaps, as a process of

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fermentation constitutes the basis of wine-making, so a period of ferment is necessary to the formation of a thinking mind and to the training of a spirit braced to meet the arrowy assaults of adversity and the more insidious attacks of prosperity. I am no more immune to the disappointments and bafflings of fate, to the despairs of inachievement and inadequacy, to the sting of desire, than is the next man : but, now, I can smile and jest ironically and deride myself ; now, I can sincerely and, though perhaps only after much suffering, effectually comfort myself with a 'What the hell !' cast into the very teeth of misfortune, and guard myself from complacency with an amused 'What the hell, anyway !' ; against the lesser irritations and obstacles, often so much more difficult to overcome than the bigger troubles, I can—although usually after weakly yielding momentarily to any frontal attack upon my nervous irritability—check myself with an 'It's just one of those things'. I have a long way to go before I attain the blessed state of 'sweet reasonableness', but I faintly discern the road I must travel. At last, I have set my feet to the spiritual homing.

The dawn grey-lights the sky. After a night of darkest doubt and grave perplexity and penumbral uncertainties, torment and grievous torture, searing pain and dreadful agony of the sorely racked spirit, a night of storm and bitter cold, of lurid gleams and *ignes fatui*, comes—thus I hope, yet do not expect—the dawn of a long day, and a brighter. 'But westward look, the land is bright.' Undaunted and undeluded, I can, after a lengthy and at one time seemingly hopeless struggle, gaze steadfastly at the rising sun.

It has, through the soul's dark night, been a long journey : yet a journey to the edge of morning.